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# HOLBEIN

BY

BEATRICE FORTESCUE

WITH FORTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN & CO.  
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# HOLBEIN<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER I

### HOLBEIN'S PERIOD, PARENTAGE, AND EARLY WORK

Historical epoch and antecedents—Special conditions and character of early Christian art—Ideals and influence of the monk—Holbein's relation to mediæval schools—His father, uncle, and Augsburg home—Probable dates for his birth and his father's death—Troubles and dispersion of the Augsburg household—From Augsburg to Basel—His brother Ambrose—Erasmus and the *Praise of Folly*; some erroneous impressions of both—Erasmus and Holbein no Protestants at heart—Holbein and the Bible—Illustrated vernacular Bibles in circulation before Luther and Holbein were born—Holbein's earliest Basel oil paintings—Direct and indirect education—Historical, geographical, and scientific revolutions of his day—Beginning of his connection with the Burgomaster of Basel—Jacob Meyer zum Hasen—Holbein's woodcuts—His studies from nature—Sudden visit to Lucerne—Italian influence on his art—Work for the Burgomaster of Lucerne.

THE eighty-three years stretching from 1461 to 1543—between the probable year of the elder Hans Holbein's birth and that in

<sup>1</sup> The name used thus, without further identification, is to be taken throughout these pages to mean Hans Holbein the *Younger*.

which the younger, the great Holbein, died—constitute one of those periods which rightly deserve the much-abused name of an Epoch. The Christian era of itself had known many: the Yellow-Danger of the fifth century making one hideous smear across Europe; the *Hic Jacet* with which this same century entombed an Empire three continents could not content; the new impulse which Charlemagne and Alfred had given to Progress in the ninth century; the triumphant establishment of Papal Supremacy, that Napoleonic idea of Gregory VII.—*Sanctus Satanas*, of the eleventh, and grand architect in a vaster Roman Empire which still “humanly contends for glory”; and lastly, at the very threshold of the Holbeins, the invention of movable printing types about 1440, and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which combined to drive the prodigies and potencies of Greek genius through the world.

Each of these had done its own special work for the advancement of man—as for that matter all things must, whether by help or helplessness. Not less than Elijah did the wretched priests of Baal serve those slow, sure, eternal Purposes, which include an Ahab and all the futile fury of his little life as the sun includes its “spots.”

But although the stream of History is one, and its every succeeding curve only an expansion of the first, there has probably been no century of our era when this stream has been so suddenly enlarged, or bent so sharply toward fresh constellations as in that of the Holbeins, —when Religion and Art, as well as Science, saw a New World upon its astonished horizon. So that we properly call it a transition period, and its representative men “transitional.”

Yet we shall never get near to these real men, to their real world, unless we can forget all about the pose of this or the other Zeitgeist—that tale

*Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*

For we must keep constantly in mind that what we call the Middle Ages or—worse yet—the Dark Ages, made up the Yesterday of the Holbeins and was the flesh and blood transmitted to them as their own flesh and blood with all its living bonds toward the Old and all its living impulses toward the New.

A now famous New Zealander is, we know, to sketch our own “mediævalism” with contemptuous pity for its darkness. But until his day comes, our farthing-dips seem to make a gaudy illumination. And, meantime, we are

alive ; we walk about ; we, too, can swell the chorus which the Initiated chant in every century with the same fond confidence : " We alone enjoy the Holy Light."

The New is ever becoming old ; the old ever changing into New. And if we ask why each waxes or wanes just when it does and as it does, there is, in the last analysis, no better answer than Aurora's explanation for chancing on the poets—

*Because the time was ripe.*

And the Holbein century is one of stupendous Transitions because the time was ripe ; and not simply because printing was invented, or Greek scholars were driven from Constantinople to scatter abroad in Europe, or Ferdinand and Isabella wanted a direct route to Cathay, or Friar Martin nailed ninety-five Theses to the door of Wittenberg's church, and built himself thereby an everlasting name as Luther.

And because the time was ripe for a new Art, even more than because this or that great painter entrained it, it also had its transition period, and Holbein is set down in manuals as a transitional painter. Teutonic, too ; because all Christian art is either Byzantine or Italian or Teutonic in its type.

When it first crept from the catacombs under

the protection of the Constantinople Court it could but be Byzantine; that strange composite obtained by stripping the Greek "beast" of every pagan beauty and then decking it out with crude Oriental ornament. But who that prizes the peculiar product of that fanaticism would have had its cradle without this sleepless terror, lest for the whole world of classic heathendom it should lose the dear-bought soul of purely Christian ideals? Or who, remembering that in thus relentlessly sacrificing its entire heritage of pagan accumulation it put back the clock of Art to the Stone Age, and had to begin all over again in the helpless bewilderment of untaught childish effort,—could find twice ten centuries too long for the astounding feat it achieved? Ten centuries, after all, make but a marvellous short course betwixt the archaic compositions of the third century and the compositions of Giotto or Wilhelm Meister.

A great deal of nonsense is talked about the "tyrannies" which the Monastic Age inflicted on Art. Of course, monasticism fostered fanaticism. It does not need the luminous genius that said it, to teach us that "whatever is necessary to what we make our sole object is sure, in some way or in some time or other, to become



our master." And with the monk, the true monk in his day of usefulness, every knowledge and every art was good or bad according as it served monastic ideals. But it is absurd to say that the monk—*qua* monk—"put the intellect in chains." The whole body of his oppression was not so paralysing as the iron little finger of Malherbe and his school of "classic" despots. To charge upon the monk the limitations of his crude thought and cruder methods is about as intelligent as it would be to fall foul of Shakespeare because boys played his women's parts.

The springs of Helicon were the monk's also, as witness Tuotilo and Bernard of Clairvaux ; but it was by the waters of Jordan that his miracles were wrought. As Johnson somewhere says of Watts, "every kind of knowledge was by the piety of his mind converted into theology." And for the rest,—by the labour of his hands, by his fasting from the things of the flesh, by his lofty faith—however erring or forgotten or betrayed, in individual cases,—by every impressive lesson of a hard life lived unto others and a hard death died unto himself, century after century it was the monk who taught and helped the barbarian of every land to turn the desolate freedom of the wild ass into

a smiling homestead and the savage Africa of his own heart into at least a better place. The marvel is that he could at the same time find room or energy to make his monastery also a laboratory, a library, and a studio. And yet he did.

To say that he abhorred Greek ideals is to say that the shepherd abhors the wolf. His life was one long fight with the insidious poison of the Greek. He did not,—at any rate in his best days—believe at all in Art for Art's sake ; and had far too intimate an acquaintance with the "natural man" to do him even justice. What he wanted was to away with him.

Yet with all its repellent features, it is to this unflinching exclusiveness of the monkish ideal that we owe one of the most exquisite blossoms on the stock of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,—their innocent and appealing art ; an art as original and as worthy of reverence, within its own peculiar province, as the masterpieces of Greece or Italy. You must turn from the beauty of Antinous to the beauty of, say, the Saint Veronica, among the works of the Cologne school at Munich, before you can estimate the Gulf of many things besides time which for ever divides the world of the one from the world of the other. And then you

must essay to embody the visions of Patmos with a child's colour-box and brushes, before you can compare the achievements—the amazing achievements—of the monkish ideal with the achievements of classic paganism.

With the school of Wilhelm Meister this tremendous revolution had accomplished itself; and solely through the indomitable will of the monk. The ideal of Greece had been to show how gods walk the earth. This Christian ideal was to show how devout men and women walk with God. Their ineffable heavenly faces look out from their golden world—

*Inviolatè, unwearied,  
Divinest, sweetest, best,*

upon this far-off, far other world, where nothing is inviolatè, and divinest things must come at last to tears and ashes.

But the monk had had his day as well as his way. The so-called Gothic architecture had expressed its uttermost of aspiration and tenuity; and painting had fulfilled its utmost accommodation to the evermore slender wall-spaces and forms which this architecture necessitated. And once again, in the fifteenth century, the time was ripe for a new transition. Art was now to reveal the realities of this world, and to concern itself with Man among them. And

just as the law of reaction flung the mind into religious revolt from the outworn dogmas and overgrown pretensions of the monkish ideal, so did it drive the healthy reaction of art into its own extravagances of protest. And we shall see how even a genius like Holbein's was unable to entirely free itself from this reactionary defect. For with all his astonishing powers, imaginative and technical, he never wholly overcame that defect of making his figures too short and too thick-set for grace, which amounted to a deformity in the full-length figures of his early work, and was due to his fierce revolt from the unnaturally elongated forms of an earlier period.

Yet we should make a grave mistake if we were to regard Holbein as cut off by this reaction from all affinities with the monkish ideals of the Cologne school. On the contrary. We shall see, especially in his religious pictures, how many of those ideals had fed the very springs of his imagination and sunk deep into his art; only expressing themselves in his own symbolism and in forms unlike theirs.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the Augsburg Gallery there is a painting by Holbein's father, the "Basilica of St. Paul," in which there is a group introduced after the

fashion of the period, which has a special biographical interest. This group, in the Baptism of St. Paul, is believed by many authorities to be a portrait-group of the painter himself,—Hans Holbein the Elder, and his two young sons, Ambrose (or Amprosy, as it was often written) and Johannes, or “Hanns.” The portrait of the father is certainly like Holbein’s own drawing of him in the Duke d’Aumale’s Collection, which Sandrart engraved in his account of the younger Holbein; while the heads of the two boys are very like those which we shall find later in a drawing in the Berlin Gallery. From the pronounced way in which his father’s hand rests on little Hans’ head, while the left points him out,—and even his elder brother “Prosy” shows by his attitude the special notice to be taken of Hans,—it is clear that if this is a portrait-group either it was painted when the boys were actually older, or the younger had already given some astonishing proof of that precocity which his early works display; for in this group the younger boy cannot be more than eight or nine years old.

Hans Holbein the Elder, who stands here with his long brown hair and beard falling over his fur gown, was a citizen of Augsburg,

living for a while in the same street with the honoured Augsburg painter, Hans Burgkmair, and occasionally working with him on large commissions. That he was a native of Augsburg, and the son—as is generally believed—of “Michel Holbain” (Augsburg commonly spelt *Holbein* with an *a*), leather-dresser—I myself cannot feel so sure as others do. There is no documentary evidence to prove that the Michael Holbein of Augsburg ever had a son, and there is both documentary and circumstantial evidence to prove that the descendants of Hans Holbein the Elder claimed a different origin. That a man was a “citizen,” or burgher, of any town, of course proves nothing. It was a period when painters especially learned their trades and practised it in many centres. And this, when guilds were all-powerful and no one could either join one without taking citizenship with it, or pursue its calling in any given place without association with the guild of that place, often involved a series of citizenships. The elder Holbein was himself a burgher of Ulm at one time, if not of other cities in which he worked.

But that Augsburg was his fixed home for the greater part of his life is certain ; and the rate-books show that after the leather-dresser

had disappeared from their register of residents in the retail business quarter of the city, in the neighbourhood of the Lech canals, Hans Holbein the Elder was, in 1494, a householder in this very place. For some years the name of "Sigmund, his brother," is bracketed with his; but about 1517 Sigmund Holbein established himself in Berne, where he accumulated a very respectable competence, which, at his death in 1540, he bequeathed to his "dear nephew, Hans Holbein, the painter," at that time a citizen of Basel. Sigmund also was a painter, but no unquestioned work of his is known.

There is nothing to show who was the wife of Sigmund Holbein's elder brother, Hans. But by 1499 this elder Hans had either a child or children mentioned with him (*sein kind*, applying equally to one or more). In all probability this is the earliest discoverable record of Hans Holbein the Younger, and his elder brother Ambrose. In all probability, too, Hans was then about two years old, and "Prosy" a year or two older. At one time it was vaguely thought that the elder Hans had three sons; and Prosy, or "Brosie," as it was sometimes written, got converted into a "Bruno" Holbein. But no vestige of an actual Bruno is to be found. And as Ambrose

Holbein's trail, whether in rate-books or art-records, utterly vanishes after 1519, it will be seen that for the most part of the younger Holbein's life he had no brother. Hence it is easy to understand how his uncle Sigmund's Will speaks only of "my dear nephew."

Hans the elder lived far on in his younger son's life. His works attest that he had talents and ideals of no mean order. But I do not propose to enter here upon the vexed question as to how far the "Renaissance" characteristics of the later works attributed to his hand are his own or his son's. Learned and exhaustive arguments have by turns consigned the best of these works to the father, to the son, and back again to the father. In at least one instance of high authority the same writer has, at different periods, held a brief for both sides and for opposite opinions! In this connection, as on the battlefield of some of the son's greatest paintings, the single-minded student of Holbein may not unprofitably draw three conclusions from the copious literature on the subject:—First, that a working hypothesis is not of necessity the right one; secondly, that in the matter of his pronouncements the critical expert also may occasionally be regarded as

*Un animal qui s'habille, deshabille et babille toujours;*



and thirdly, that in default of incontestable documentary proofs the modest "so far as I have been able to discover" of Holbein's first biographer, Van Mander, is a capital anchor to windward, and is at any rate preferable to driving forth upon the howling waters of Classification, like Constance upon the Sea of Greece, "Alle sterelesse, God wot."

But my chief reason for not pursuing the Protean phantom of Holbein's Augsburg period is that,—apart from my own disagreement with many accepted views about the works it includes, and the utter lack of data for determining any position irrefutably,—it is comparatively unimportant to the purpose of this little book. For wherever the younger painter was born,—whether at Augsburg or Ulm or elsewhere,—and whatever I believe to be his rightful claim to such paintings as the St. Elizabeth and St. Barbara of the St. Sebastian altar-piece at Munich, Fame, like Van Mander, has rightly written him down Holbein *Basiliensis*.

It is true that his father's brushes were his alphabet. It may be true, though I doubt it, that his father's teaching was his only technical school. But if he was, as to the last he gloried in being, the child of the Old Period, he was much more truly the immediate pupil of the

Van Eycks than of his father's irresolute ideals ; while Basel was his university. And whatever may have been his debt to those childish years when the little Iulus followed his father with trembling steps, his debt to Basel was immensely greater. The door-sill of Johann Froben's printing-house was the threshold of his earthly immortality.

When he turned his back on the low-vaulted years of Augsburg, it was because for him also the time was ripe. The Old Period had cast his genius ; the New was to expand it to new powers and purposes.

*Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year's dwelling for the new ;  
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
Built up its idle door,  
Stretch'd in his last-found home and knew the old no more.*

\* \* \* \*

It may easily have been the elder Hans' continuous troubles, whether due to his fault or his misfortune it is idle now to inquire, which made his sons leave Augsburg. Certain it is that he but escaped from the clutches of one suit for debt after another in order to tumble into some fresh disaster of the sort, until his own brother Sigmund appears among his exasperated creditors. After 1524 Hans

Holbein the Elder vanishes from the records. Probably, therefore, it was at about this date that he paid,—Heaven and himself only knowing how willingly,—the one debt which every man pays at the last.

At all events his sons did leave Augsburg about 1514; or, at any rate, Hans did, since there is a naïve little Virgin and Child in the Basel Museum, dated 1514, which must have been painted in the neighbourhood of Constance in this year,—probably for the village church where it was discovered. As everything points to the conclusion that Holbein was born in 1497, he would have been some seventeen years old at this time, and “Prosy” eighteen or nineteen. Substantially, therefore, they must have looked pretty much as in the drawing which their father had made of them three years before; that precious drawing in silver-point which is now in the Berlin Collection (Plate 2). Over the elder, still with the curly locks of the group in the “St. Paul Basilica,” is written *Prosy*; over the younger, *Hanns*. The age of the latter, fourteen, may still be deciphered above his portrait, but that of Ambrose has quite vanished. Between the two is the family name, written in Augsburg fashion, Holbain. At the top of the sheet stands the year of



"PROSY" AND "HANS" HOLBEIN  
[Drawn by their father, Hans Holbein the elder]  
Silver-point, Berlin Cabinet



the drawing, almost illegible, but believed to be 1511.

Of the elder brother all that is certainly known may be said here once for all. In 1517 he entered the Painters' Guild at Basel, where he is called "Ambrosius Holbein, citizen of Augsburg." He made a number of designs for wood-engraving, title-pages, and ornaments, for the printers of Basel—all of fair merit. He may also have worked in the studio of Hans Herbster, a Basel painter of considerable note. Herbster's portrait in oils, long held to be a fine work of the younger brother,—now that it has passed from the Earl of Northbrook's collection to that of the Basel Museum, is attributed to Ambrose Holbein. But little else is known of him; and after 1519, as has been said, the absence of any record of him among the living suggests that he died in that year.

In the late summer of 1515 came that momentous trifle which has for ever linked the name of young Hans Holbein with that of Erasmus. Whether, as some say, the scholar gave him the order, or, as seems more likely, some friend of both had the copy, now in the Basel Museum, on the margins of which the lad drew his spirited pen-and-ink sketches,—it is on record that they were made before the

end of December, and that Erasmus himself was delighted with their wit and vigour. And, in truth, they are exceedingly clever, both in the art with which a few strokes suggest a picture, and in that by which the picture emphasises every telling point in the satire. But a great deal too much has been built upon both the satire and the sketches; a great deal, also, falsely built upon them.

They have been made to do duty, in default of all genuine proofs, as supports to the theory by which Protestant writers have claimed both Erasmus and Holbein as followers of Luther in their hearts, without sufficient courage or zeal to declare themselves such. I confess that, though myself no less ardent as a Protestant than as an admirer of Holbein, I cannot, for the life of me, see any justification for either the claim or its implied charge of timorousness.

Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*—like so many a paradox started as a joke,—had no notion of being serious at all until it was seriously attacked. Some four years before its illustrations riveted the name of a stripling artist to that of the world-renowned scholar, Erasmus had fallen ill while a guest in the sunny Bucksbury home where three tiny daughters and

a baby son were the darlings of Sir Thomas More and his wife. To beguile the tedium of convalescence the invalid had scribbled off a jeu d'esprit, with its punning play on More's name, *Encomium Morie*, in which every theme for laughter, in a far from squeamish day, was collected under that title. Read aloud to More and his friends, it was declared much too good to be limited to private circulation; and accordingly, with some revision and expansion, it was printed. That it scourged with its mockery those things in both Church and State which Erasmus and More and many another fervent Churchman hated,—such as the crying evils which called aloud for reformation in the highest places, and above all, that it lashed the detested friars whom the best churchmen most loathed,—these things were foregone conclusions in such a composition. But a laugh, even a satirical laugh, at the expense of excrescences or follies in one's camp, is a very far cry from going over to its foes. As a huge joke Erasmus wrote the *Praise of Folly*; as such More and all his circle lauded it; as such Froben reprinted it; and as such young Holbein pointed all its laughing gibes.

And it was part and parcel of the joke that he launched his own sly arrow at the author



himself. Erasmus could but laugh at the adroitness with which the young man from Augsburg had drawn a reverend scholar writing away at his desk, among the votaries of Folly, and written *Erasmus* over his head. But it was hardly to be expected that he should altogether relish the witty implication, or the presumption of the unknown painter who had ventured to make it. Nor did he. Turning over a page he also contrived to turn the laugh yet once again, this time against the too-presuming artist. Finding, perhaps, the coarsest of the sketches, one in keeping with the "fat and splendid pig from the drove of Epicurus," he in his turn wrote the name of *Holbein* above the wanton boor at his carousals. It was a reprisal not more delicate than the spirit with which subjects too sacred to have been named in the same breath with Folly,—the very words of our Lord Himself,—had been dragged into such company. But though it, too, was a joke, this little slap of wounded amour propre has found writers to draw from it an entire theory that Holbein led a life of debauchery!

Yet even this feat of deduction is surpassed by that which argues that because Erasmus and Holbein lashed bad prelates and vicious monks with satire, therefore they detested the

whole hierarchy of Rome and loathed all monks, good or bad. "Erasmus laid the egg which Luther hatched" is the oft-repeated cry; forgetting or ignoring the plain fact that Erasmus eyed the Lutheran egg with no little mistrust in its shell and with unequivocal disgust in its full-feathered development. "What connection have I with Luther," he writes some three years after Holbein illustrated Stultitia's worshippers, "or what recompense have I to expect from him that I should join with him to oppose the Church of Rome, which I take to be the true part of the Church Catholic, or to oppose the Roman Pontiff who is the head of the Catholic Church? I am not so impious as to dissent from the Church nor so ungrateful as to dissent from Leo, from whom I have received uncommon favour and indulgence."

As to Holbein's "Protestant sympathies"—using the name for the whole Lutheran movement in which Protestantism had its rise,—the assertions are even less grounded in fact, if that be possible. If he had it not already in his heart, through Erasmus and Amerbach and Froben and More and every other great influence to which he yielded himself at all, he early acquired a deep and devout sense of the

need of reform *within* the Church. Like all these lifelong friends, he wanted to see the Church of Rome return to her purer days and cast off the corruptions of a profligate idleness. Like them he couched his lance against the unworthy priest, the gluttonous or licentious monk, the wolves in sheep's clothing that were destroying the fold from within. Like them, as they re-echoed Colet--the saintly Dean of St. Paul's,--he passionately favoured the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular and placing them in the hands, or at any rate bringing them to the familiar knowledge, of peasant as well as prelate. But surely one must know very little of the teachings of the stoutest Churchmen of Holbein's day and acquaintance not to know also that they encouraged if they did not plant these opinions in his mind.

"Dürer's woodcuts and engravings, especially his various scenes from the Passion," writes even Woltmann, the biographer to whom every student of Holbein owes so grateful a debt, "had prepared the soil among the people for Luther's translation of the Bible. Holbein's pictures from the Old Testament followed in their wake, and helped forward the work." Yet it seems difficult to suppose that

Woltmann could have been ignorant of the facts of the case. So far were Holbein's, or any other artist's, Bible illustrations or Bible pictures from arguing a "Lutheran" monopoly in the vernacular Bible, that in Germany alone there were fifteen translated and illustrated editions of the Bible before Luther's appeared; and of these fifteen some half-dozen were published before Luther was born. Quentell, at Cologne, for instance, published a famous translation with exceedingly good woodcuts in 1480,—three years before Luther's birth. While some nine years before Quentell's German translation, the Abbot Niccolo Malermi published his *Biblia Vulgare* in the Italian vernacular, which went through twenty editions in less than a century: one of which,—brought out at Venice in 1490 by the Giunta Brothers,—was illustrated by woodcuts of the greatest beauty. So widespread was the demand for this "Malermi Bible" that another edition, with new illustrations of almost equal merit, was produced at Venice in 1493, by the printer known as *Anima Mia*. All of these were vernacular Bibles; all illustrated; all widely known throughout Italy and Germany before Holbein was born or Luther was in his tenth year. And certainly it has not yet been sug-

gested by the most rabid Protestantism that either these or any of the many other illustrated vernacular Bibles printed long before Luther's great translation,—a translation with a special claim to immortality because it may be said to have set the standard for modern German,—were anything but Roman Catholic Bibles. They were translated and illustrated in behalf of no doctrine which Protestantism does not hold in common with the Church of Rome.

To lose hold of these things, to lose sight of the true attitude of Holbein in his Bible woodcuts and his "Images of Death," or of either Erasmus or Holbein in their satires on the flagrant abuses within their Church, and their unwavering devotion to that Church,—is to deliberately throw away the clue to the most vital qualities in the work of either, and to the whole course and character of Holbein himself, no less than to that of his lifelong friend and benefactor.

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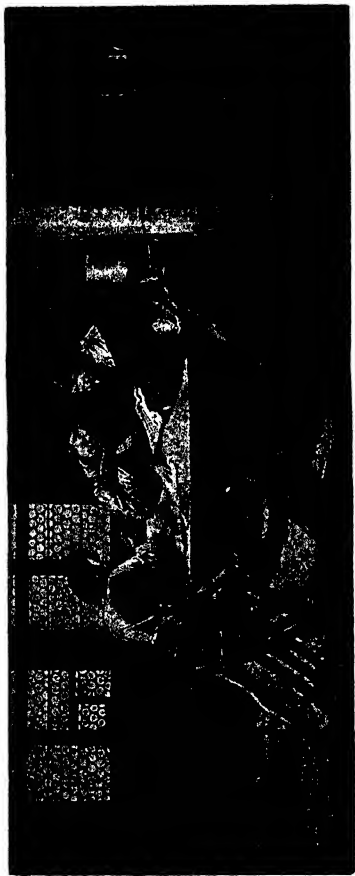
In 1515 the young painter who had come to Basel to better his fortunes painted a table for Hans Bär's wedding. The bridegroom marched away, carrying the Basel colours, to the bloody field of Marignano (or Melegnano)

in this same year, and never came back to sit with his smiling bride around Holbein's most amusing conceits—where "Saint Nobody" was depicted among all the catastrophes of which he is the scapegoat, and a few ordinary trifles—a letter, a pair of spectacles, etc.—were marvellously represented, as if dropped by chance above the painted decorations, so that people were always attempting to pick them up. But Hans Bär's sister had been the first wife of a certain brave comrade—Meyer "of the Hare," who did come back and played an important part in young Holbein's career. Long lost among forgotten rubbish, Hans Bär's table has been unearthed, and is now preserved in the town library at Zurich.

But although Holbein had got his foot on the ladder of fame in this year's beginning of his connection with Froben, he was as yet very thankful to accept any commission, however humble. And as a human document there is a touch of peculiar, almost pathetic interest about the Schoolmaster's Signboard preserved by Bonifacius Amerbach, and now with his collection in the Basel Museum (Plate 3). It is a simple thing, with no pretension to a place among "works of art"—this bit of flotsam from 1516, when it was painted. Originally

the two views, the Infant Class and the Adult Class, were on opposite sides of the sign ; but they have been carefully split apart so as to be seen side by side. In the one is the quaint but usual Dame's School of the period ; in the other the public is informed how the adults of Basel may retrieve the lack of such early opportunities. The inscription above each sets forth how whosoever wishes to do so can be taught to read and write correctly, and be furnished with all the essentials of a decent education at a very moderate cost ; "children on the usual terms." And there is a delightful clause to say that "if anyone is too dull-witted to learn at all, no payment will be accepted, be it Burger or Apprentice, Wife or Maid."

Somehow, looking at the young fellow at the right of the table, in the Adult Class, sitting facing the anxious schoolmaster, with his own brow all furrowed by the effort to follow him and his mouth doggedly set to succeed,—while the late, low sun of a summer afternoon streams in through the leaded window,—one muses on the chance that so may the young painter from Augsburg, now but nineteen, himself have sat upon this very bench and leaned across this very table, in a like determination to widen out his small



SCHOOLMASTER'S SIGNBOARD  
*Oil, Basel Museum*





store of book-learning. He could have had little opportunity to do so in the ever-shifting, bailiff-haunted home of his boyhood. And somewhere he certainly learned to write quite as well as even the average gentleman of his day ; witness the notes on his drawings.

Somewhere, too, and no later than these first Basel years, he acquired the power to read and appreciate even the niceties of Latin, though he probably could not have done more than make these out to his own satisfaction. All his work of illustration is too original, too spontaneous, too full of flashes of subtle personal sympathy with the text, to have emanated from an interpreter, or been dictated by another mind than his own. And this very Signboard may have paid for lessons which he could not otherwise afford. For if there is any force in circumstantial evidence it is certain that Holbein not only wrote, but read and pondered and thought for himself in these years when he doubtless had many more hours of leisure than he desired, from a financial standpoint.

And the greatest pages of his autobiography, written with his brush, will be only so many childish rebuses if we forget what astounding pages of History and Argument were turned before him. In Augsburg he had seen the

Emperor Maximilian riding in state more than once, and heard much talk about that Emperor's interests and schemes and fears; and of thrones and battlefields engaged with or against these. Augsburg was in closest ties of commerce with Venice; and the tides of many a tremendous issue of civilisation rolled to and fro through the gates of the Free Swabian City.

Child and lad, his was a precocious intelligence; and it had been fed upon meat for strong men. He had heard of Alexander VI.'s colossal infamies, and those of Cæsar Borgia as well; and of the kingdoms ranging to this or that standard after the death of Pope and Prince. He was nine years old then. Old enough, too, to drink in the wonderful herotales of one Christopher Columbus of Genoa, whose fame was running though the Whispering Gallery of Europe, while he himself lay dying at Valladolid—ill, heartbroken, poor, disgraced,—yet proudly confident that he had demonstrated, past all denial, the truth of his own conviction, and touched the shores of Cathay, sailing westward from Spain. Da Gama, Vespucci, Balboa, Magellan,—theirs were indeed names and deeds to set the heart of youth leaping, between its cradle and its twenty-fifth year.

Holbein was twelve when Augsburg heard that England had a young king, whom it crowned as Henry VIII. He was setting out from his home, such as it was, to fight his own boyish battle of Life, when the news spread of Flodden's Field. None of these things would let such an one as he was rest content to apprehend them as a yokel. From either the honest dominic of the Signboard or some other, we may be sure he sought the means to read and digest them for himself. And if he learnt some smattering of the geography of the earth and the heavens after the crude notions of an older day, he could have done no other, at that time, in the most enlightened Universities. Ptolemy's *Geographia* was still the text-book, and the so-called "Ptolemaic Theory" still the astronomical creed of scholars. Copernicus was, indeed, a man of forty when Holbein was painting this Signboard in 1516. But Copernicus was still interluding the active duties of Frauenburg's highly successful governor, tax-collector, judge, and vicar-general,—to say nothing of his brilliant essays on finance,—with those studies in his watch-tower which were to revolutionise the astronomical conceptions of twenty centuries and wheel the

Earth around the Sun instead of the Sun around the Earth. But his system was not actually published until its author was on his death-bed, in the year of Holbein's own death. So that these stupendous new ideas were only the unpublished rumours and discussions of circles like that of Froben and Erasmus, when Holbein first entered it. 89677.

But it is no insignificant sidelight on the history of this circle and this period to recall that the subversive theories of Copernicus,—far as even he was from anticipating how a Kepler and a Newton should one day shatter the “Crystalline Spheres,” and relegate to the dustheap of antiquity the “Epicycles,” to which he still clung,—had their only generous hearing from influential churchmen of Rome. Luther recoiled from them as the blasphemies of “an arrogant fool”; and even Melanchthon urged that they should be “suppressed by the secular arm.” Nor let it be forgotten that these matters were never a far cry from those Basel printing-presses where the greatest master-printers were themselves thorough and eager scholars; “Men of Letters,” in the noblest sense of the word. And the discussion of all these high concerns of history and letters was as much a part of the daily life surging around



PLATE 4



JACOB MEYER (ZUM HASEN)

*Oils. Basel Museum*







DOROTHEA MEYER (*née* KANNEGIESSER)

*Oils. Basel Museum*

their printing-presses as the roar of the Rhine was in the air of Basel.

As has been said, the sister of that Hans Bär for whom Holbein painted the "St. Nobody" table had been the first wife, Magdalena Bär—a widow with one daughter, when she married him—of Jacob Meyer,<sup>1</sup> "of the Hare" (*zum Hasen*). Magdalena died in 1511, and about 1512 Meyer zum Hasen married Dorothea Kannegiesser. And now in 1516, a memorable year to Holbein on account of this influential patron, the young stranger was commissioned to paint the portraits of Meyer (Plate 4) and his second wife, Dorothea (Plate 5). These oil paintings, and the drawings for them, are now in the Basel Museum. And no one can examine them, remembering that the painter was but nineteen, without echoing the exclamation of a brilliant French writer: "Holbein ira beaucoup plus loin dans son art, mais déjà il est superbe." These warm translucent browns are instinct with life and beauty.

Against the rich Renaissance architecture and the blue of the sky-vista the massive head of Meyer and the blonde one of his young wife,

<sup>1</sup> Variouslly written Meyer, Meier, Mejer, Meiger, or Megger. Bär is also written *Ber*, or *Berin*.

—the latter so expressive of half-proud, half-shy consciousness,—stand out in wonderful vigour. From the scarlet cap on his thickly curling brown hair to the piece of money between his thumb and finger, the Burgomaster's picture is a virile and masterly portrait. And just as forcefully is the charm of his pretty wife,—with all her bravery of scarlet frock, gold embroidery, head-dress and chains,—her own individual charm. They are both as much themselves in this fine architectural setting as in their own good house “of the Hare” which adjoined the rising glories of the new Renaissance “Council Hall” (*Rathaus*) in which Meyer was to preside so often.

In 1516 he had just been elected Mayor for the first time; but after this he had many consecutive re-elections in the alternate years which permitted this. For no burgomaster could hold office for two years in actual succession. Previous to being Mayor he had been an eminent personage as master of the guilds. And both before and after his mayoralty he was a distinguished soldier,—rising from ensign to captain in the Basel contingent which served at different times among the Auxiliaries of France and of the Pope.

But what made this election of 1516 a civic

epoch was that Meyer zum Hasen (there were many unrelated Meyers in Basel, and two among Holbein's patrons, who must be carefully distinguished according to the name of the house each occupied) was the first Burgo-master ever elected in this city from below the knightly rank. While the piece of money in his hand, far from fulfilling the absurd purpose sometimes suggested,—that of showing his claim to wealth!—marks another civic event of this year. For it was on the 10th of January, 1516, that the Emperor Maximilian had just issued the Charter which gave to Basel the right to mint her own gold coins. In the painting the pose of Meyers' right hand has been altered, and the position which Holbein originally gave it can still be made out. The monogram and date are on the background.

In accordance with his invariable rule for portraits in oils, Holbein first made a careful drawing of each head on the same scale as the finished picture, carrying it out with great freedom but at the same time with astonishing care and finish. So that his studies for portraits are themselves works of art, sometimes invested with even more spirit than the oil painting, which was never made direct from

the living model,—at any rate, until ready for the finishing touches. Drawn with a point which could give a line as bold or as almost impalpable as he wished, and modelled to the very texture of the surfaces, the carnations are so sufficiently indicated or rendered with red chalk as to serve every purpose. Sometimes notes are also added. Thus in the upper corner of the drawing for Meyer's head the artist has noted "eyebrows lighter than the hair" in his microscopic yet firm writing.

With these fine portraits, painted as if united by the same architectural background, Holbein began a friendship of many years. After some four centuries it is not possible to produce written records of such ties except in occasional corroborative details. But neither is it possible to mistake the painted records of repeated commissions. While as the lifelong leader of the Catholic party in Basel, it was natural that Meyer zum Hasen should have much in common with a painter who all his life held firmly to his friendships with the most conspicuous champions of that party.

Johann Froben was another of these; and from 1515 until Froben's death eleven years later Holbein had more and more to do for this printer. Occasionally, too, he drew for

other Basel printers; but not often. The eighty-two sketches on the margins of that priceless copy of the *Praise of Folly*, which Basel preserves in her Museum, had been suited to their company. Admirable, though unequal, as are their merits, they *are* sketches, whose chief beauty is their happy spontaneity. Such things are among the trifles of art, and are not to be put into the scales at all with the finished perfection of his serious designs for wood engraving. These were drawn on the block; and even these cannot properly represent the drawing itself except when cut by some such master hand as his own. Since in preparing the design for printing the background is cut away, leaving the composition itself in lines of relief,—it follows that everything, so far as the reproduction is concerned, must depend upon the cleanness and delicacy of the actual cutting. A clouded eye, a fumbling touch, and the most ethereal idea becomes its travesty—the purest line debased. Hence the necessity for taking the knife into consideration in judging such work.

This is not the place for any fraction of that hot debate which Kugler ironically styles “the great question of the sixteenth century”; the debate as to whether Holbein himself did or

did not cut any of his own blocks. Assuredly he could do so. The exquisite adjustment of every line to its final purpose, the masterly understanding of the proper limitations and field of every effect, all prove that he had an unerring knowledge of the craft no less than of the art of Illustration. But in his day that craft, like every other, had its own guild ; and it would not have been likely to tolerate any intrusion on its rights.

We know, too, that those woodcuts which most attest Holbein's genius were engraved by that mysterious "Hans Lützelburger, form-cutter, called Franck" (*Hans Lützelburger, Formschnider, genannt Franck*), who still remains, after all the researches of enthusiastic admirers, a hand and a name, and beyond this—nothing. But it is when Holbein's designs are engraved with Lützelburger's astonishingly beautiful cutting that we can appreciate how wonderful was the design itself. To compare these fairy pictures with the painter's large cartoons is to get some conception of the arc his powers described. It seems incredible that the same hand could hang an equal majesty on the wall of a tiny shell and on that of a king's palace, and with equal justness of eye. Yet it is done. He will ride a donkey or an

elephant with the like mastery ; but you will never find Holbein saddling the donkey with a howdah.

It is not always possible to subscribe to Ruskin's flowing judgments ; but I gratefully borrow the one with which he sums up thus, in a lecture on wood-engraving : Holbein does not give many gradations of light, the speaker says, " but not because Holbein cannot give chiaroscuro if he chooses. He is twenty times a stronger master of it than Rembrandt ; but therefore he knows exactly when and how to use it, and that wood-engraving is not the proper means for it. The quantity of it which is needful for his story he will give, and that with an unrivalled subtlety."

And the student of Holbein's art can but feel that Ruskin has here touched upon a characteristic of the painter's peculiar power in every phase of it ;—the power to be Cæsar within himself ; to say to his hand, " thus far," to say to his fancy, " no farther." Those who have come to know Holbein something more than superficially, or as a mere maker of portraits, will smile at the dictum of some very recent " authority " which pronounces him wanting in imagination ; or at the hasty



conclusion that what he *would* not, that he could not.

He has given us, for instance, no animal paintings or landscapes pure and simple, or, at least, none such have come down to us. And yet what gems of landscape he has touched into his backgrounds here and there! And what drawings of animal life he made! There are two, for instance, in the Basel Museum which could not be surpassed; studies in silver-point and water-colours of lambs and a bat outstretched. No reproduction could give the exquisite texture of the bat's wings, the wandering red veins, the almost diaphanous membrane, the furry body,—a miracle of patience and softness. It is all purest Nature. Like Topsy one can but "'spec' it growed" rather than was created.

And they are not only beautiful in themselves but full of living meanings. Many an hour the young painter enjoyed while he made such studies as his lambs on the pleasant slopes about Basel; the mountains scalloping the horizon, and all the sweet fresh winds vocal with tinkling bells or the chant of the deep-throated Rhine. Many of "the long, long thoughts" of youth,—those thoughts that ring like happy bells or sweep like rushing rivers,

kept him company as he laid these delicate strokes and washes that seem to exhale the very breath of morning across four hundred years.

In the next year after painting the portraits of Meyer and his wife there is a sudden break in the painter's story which has always puzzled his biographers. After such a brilliant start in Basel it is perplexing to find the young man, instead of proceeding to join the Painters' Guild and take the necessary citizenship, suddenly turn his back on all these encouragements and leave the town for a long absence and remote journeys. As will be seen when we come to consider the story of Holbein's married life, however, I have a theory that the influence which sent him south in such an unexpected fashion was apart from professional affairs.

Whether this is a good shot or no, certain it is that he did now go far south,—as distances were in those days; and that, paying his way as he went by his brush, he went first to Lucerne, where the evidence goes to show that he apparently thought of settling instead of at Basel,—and then on beyond it. And it seems highly probable that at this time he pushed on over the Alps and made his

way into Italy,—already the Mecca of every artist.

Here he could not now, in 1517, have hoped to see either Bramante or Leonardo da Vinci in person. The former had died at Rome two years before; but, without getting even as far as Pavia, Milan could show some splendid monuments to his sojourn within her walls; characteristic examples of that architecture of the closing fifteenth century which Holbein loved as Bramante himself. Leonardo was now in France; but in the refectory of the Santa Maria Monastery was his immortal, though, alas! not imperishable, masterpiece—"The Last Supper." Time had not yet taught Leonardo, much less Holbein, the fleeting nature of mural oil-painting; the only so-called "fresco" painting which the latter ever attempted, so far as is known. But the great Supper was still glowing in all the splendour of its original painting, and would impress itself indelibly on an eye such as Holbein's. In more than one cathedral, too, as he wandered in such a holiday, he would have noted how Mantegna had made its architecture the background for his own individual genius.

At any rate each of these, somehow and somewhere, set its own seal upon the

reverent heart of Holbein at about this time. Whether through their original works or copies of them,—already familiar to Augsburg as well as Lucerne,—the lad sat humbly at the feet of both Leonardo and Mantegna. By the first, beside many a loftier lesson, he was confirmed and strengthened in his native respect for accurate studies of the living world around him. From the second he learned a still deeper scorn of “pretty” art. Yet though he sat at their feet, it was as no servile disciple. He would fain be taught by them; fain follow them in all humility and frankness. But it was in order to expand his own powers, not to surrender them; to speak his own thoughts the better, not theirs, nor another’s.

And, in any event, on such a journey Lucerne must come first. And that he thought of making some long stay here when he returned is shown by his having joined in this year 1517, the Guild of St. Luke, the Painters’ Guild of Lucerne, then but newly organised. “Master Hans Holbein has given one Gulden,” reads the old entry. Two other items of this visit give us glimpses of its flesh-and-blood realities, perhaps of its unrest. The first, that he also joined a local company of Archers, the Militia of his day, seems to bring his living

football very close. A resonant, manly, wholesome football it is, too! This broad-shouldered young fellow is as ready to draw a good stout bow among mountain-marksmen as a lamb among its daffodils. The second item makes it still clearer that he had other elements as well as the pastoral in his blood. On the 10th of December he got himself fined for his share in a street-scrimmage, where he would seem to have decidedly preferred the livelier to the "better part" of valour.

And then he would appear to have shaken the dust, or more likely the snows, of Lucerne off his feet for the road to Italy, if not for Italy itself. Whatever his objective, he got, at any rate, well on toward the Pass of the St. Gothard. The scanty clues of such works as have remained on record prove that he reached Altdorf. But there the actual trail is altogether lost. If he spent the entire interval brush in hand, or if—as I believe—he treated himself to a bit of a holiday beyond the Alps, can be but a guess in the dark.

By this time the New Year of 1518, then falling in March, could not have been far off, before or behind him. And in 1518 Holbein executed the commission which must have been the envy of every local artist. Jacob von Hertenstein,

Burgomaster of Lucerne, had now got his fine new house ready for decoration; and it was to Holbein that he gave the splendid commission to decorate it to his fancy,—the interior as well as the façade.

And a renowned triumph the painter made of it; a triumph such as, perhaps, no other artist north of Italy could then have equalled. It is idle now to dwell upon the religious subjects of one room, the genre paintings in another, the battle scenes of a third, and so on through those five famous rooms which were still in existence and fair preservation so late as 1824, but are now for ever lost; to say nothing of the painted Renaissance architecture and the historic legends which looked like solid realities when the façade was studied. But "Mizraim is become merchandise"; and all that is now left of what should have been a treasured and priceless heirloom is but a monument to the shame of that citizen, a banker, who could condemn such a thing to destruction as indifferently as if it had been a cowshed, and to the shame of the municipality which, at any cost, did not prevent it. Some hasty sketches—due to individual enterprise and a sense of the dignity of Holbein's fame—an original drawing for

one of the façade-paintings, and a few fragments of the interior paintings, which still show themselves, by chance, in the banker's *stable wall*—these are all that remain to speak of what must have been the enthusiastic labour of the greater part of Holbein's twenty-first year!

## CHAPTER II

### HOLBEIN BASILIENSIS

1519-1526

*Holbein Basiliensis*—Enters the Painters' Guild—Bonifacius Amerbach and his portrait—The Last Supper and its Judas—The so-called "Fountain of Life" at Lisbon—Genius for design and symbolism in architecture—Versatility, humour, fighting scenes—Holbein becomes a citizen and marries—Basel in 1519—Froben's circle—Tremendous events and issues of the time—Holbein's religious works—The Nativity and Adoration at Freiburg—Hans Oberriedt—The Basel Passion in eight panels—Passion Drawings—Christ in the tomb—Christ and Mary Magdalen at the door of the sepulchre—Rathaus wall-paintings—Birth of Holbein's eldest child—The Solothurn Madonna: its discovery and rescue—Holbein's wife and her portraits—Suggested solutions of some biographical enigmas—Title pages—Portraits of Erasmus—Journey to France, probably to Lyons and Avignon—Publishers and pictures of the so-called "Dance of Death"—Dorothea Oßlenburg as Venus and Laïs Corinthia—Triumph of the Protestant party—Holbein decides to leave Basel for a time—The Meyer-Madonna of Darmstadt and Dresden, and its portraits.

AND now it is 1519, and with it the true Hour of Holbein's destiny is striking. Take away the coming seven years and you will still have what Holbein is too often



thought to be only—a great portrait-painter. No greater ever etched the soul of a man on his mask. His previous and his after achievements would still amply justify the honour of centuries. But add these seven years, from 1519 to 1526, and dull indeed must be the intelligence that cannot recognise the great Master, without qualification and in the light of any thoughtful comparison with the very greatest.

His Basel career may be said to begin here ; his earlier work furnishing the Prologue. On the 25th September, 1519, when he was about two-and-twenty, he joined the Basel Guild of Painters ; that same " Guild of Heaven " (*Zunft zum Himmel*) which his brother Ambrose had joined two years earlier and from which he seems to have passed to the veritable guild of Heaven at about this latter date.

And hardly is the ink dry upon the record of his membership than Holbein painted one of the most beautiful of his portraits—that of Bonifacius Amerbach (Plate 6). He stands beside a tree on which is hung an inscription. Behind him is Holbein's favourite early background,—the blue of the sky, here broken by the warm brown and green of the branch, and the faint glimpse of far-away mountains. Under his



BONIFACIUS AMERBACH

*Oils. Basel Museum*



soft cap, with a cross for badge, his intensely gleaming blue eyes look out beneath grave brows. The lips are softly yet firmly set ; the mouth framed by the sunny beard which repeats the red-brown of his hair. The black scholar's gown, with its trimming of black fur, discloses his rich damask doublet and white collar.

Well may the inscription assert—above the signature, the name of the sitter and the date 14th October, 1519—

*" Though but a painted face I am not far removed from  
Life ; but rather,  
By truthful lines, the noble image of my Possessor.  
As he accomplishes eight times three years, so faithfully  
in me also  
Is Nature's work proclaimed by the work of Art."*

For here in truth is a work of Nature which is no less a work of Art.

This is the Amerbach who began and inspired his son Basilius (so named after Bonifacius's brother) to complete the Holbein Collection, which the Basel Museum bought long afterwards. And such was the love of both that they included, perhaps deliberately, much that has small probability of claim to be Holbein's work. They would reject nothing attributed to him ; thinking a bushel of chaff

well worth housing if it might yield one genuine grain. And in view of these expressive facts, it is hardly necessary to argue in behalf of the tradition that more than a conventional friendship bound the two young men together,—printer's son and painter's son, musician-scholar and scholar-painter, Churchman and Churchman; the one twenty-four, the other twenty-two.

Bonifacius was the youngest of Johann Amerbach's three gifted sons. As all the world knows, Johann had been also a scholar as well as a printer, and great in both capacities. The most eminent scholars of his day gravitated as naturally to this noble personality as they afterwards did to that of his protégé and successor, Johann Froben. He had educated his sons, too, to worthily continue his life-work and maintain his devout principles. Bonifacius was the darling of more than one heart not given to softness. He had been more the friend than the pupil of Ulrich Zasius at the University of Freiburg, before he went to Avignon to complete his legal studies under Alciat. Five years after this portrait was painted he became Professor of Law in the Basel University. "I am ready to die," writes Erasmus of him, "when I shall have seen any

young man purer or kinder or more sincere than this one."

Very possibly it was for Bonifacius himself that Holbein painted his own portrait about this time (Plate 1, frontispiece). It is a worthy mate, at all events. In the Amerbach Catalogue it was simply called "Holbein's counterfeit, in dry colour" (*ein conterfehung Holbein's mit trocken farben*); the frame, too, was catalogued, though the painting was kept in a cabinet separately when the Basel Museum acquired it with the Collection.

The vigour and finish of this portrait on vellum, done in crayons or body-colour, make it a gem of the first water. The drawing was done in black chalk, and the tints have been rubbed in with coloured crayons or given with the point where lines of colour were required. The work has the delicacy of a water-colour and the strength of oils. The broad, soft, red hat, though so fine a bit of colour, is clearly worn as part of a simple everyday habit. There is no suggestion of studying for effect, or even caring at all about it. He wears his hat pulled soberly down over his brown hair exactly as when he wore it thus about the business of the day. The plastic modelling of the puckered brow and the mobile mouth is

beautifully indicated. The bluish tone left by the razor is just hinted. In his drab coat with its black velvet bands, with his shirt, on which the high lights have been applied, slightly open at the throat, Holbein himself seems to stand before one as in life.

Among the "early works" of the Amerbach Catalogue there is one which shows strong traces of Leonardo's and even more of Mantegna's influence on him at this time. It is a Last Supper, painted in oils on wood. But it was so mutilated in the iconoclastic fury of 1529, and has been so cobbled, re-broken, re-set, and "restored" generally, that it can no longer be called Holbein's work without many reservations. There is also another Last Supper, one of a coarsely painted set on canvas, which is attributed to him on much more doubtful grounds, to judge by the composition and colouring. Myself I should be inclined to see the inferior hand of Ambrose, Hans the elder, or perhaps even Sigmund Holbein in these, if they are genuine Holbein works at all.

But there are still to be seen the traces of his own hand and mind in the Last Supper in oils on wood. St. John's head must originally have been very beautiful ; very manly, too,

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—dark with sudden anguish and recoil. There is a separate head of St. John, in oils, in the same collection, which shows how fixed was this noble originality of type in Holbein's conception of "the beloved apostle." But it is in Judas that the patient student will find, perhaps, most of Holbein's peculiar cast of thought, when once the initial repulsion is overcome.

By a very natural arrangement he is brought into the immediate foreground and sits there, already isolated, already damned, in such a torment of body and soul as haunts the spectator who has had the courage to reconsider the dictum of authorities who call him "a Jew of frightful vulgarity." Frightful he may be; but it is a strange judgment which can find him vulgar. Unfortunately, the painting is no longer in a condition to justify reproduction; but such as study this yellow-robed, emaciated, shivering, fever-consumed Judas will, I venture to assert, find food for thought in it even under all the injuries the work has undergone.

It is a demon-driven soul if ever there was one. He is in the very act of springing to his feet and rushing away anywhere, anywhere out of this Presence;—no more concerned about his money-bag than about the food he loathes. Thirty pieces of silver! If the priests have



lied; if this is in very truth the Messiah his heart still half believes Him, will thirty pieces of silver buy his soul from the Avenger? Is there time still to escape? What if he break the promise given when he was over-persuaded in the market-place the other day? But did not the High Priest himself declare that this is Beelzebub in person,—this fair, false, dear,—oh! still too dear Illusion? Up! Let him be gone out of this!—from the sound of that Voice, from the sight of that Face, get the thing over and done, done—done one way or another! If God's work, as the priests swear, well and good. He will have earned the pity of God Himself. If the devil's, as his heart whispers, well, too! Let him take his price and buy himself a rope long enough to house his soul in any Hell, rather than sit on in this one! It is all painted, or was once; all written on that sunken cheek, that matted hair and clammy brow; in that cavernous socket, that eye of lurid despair; on the whole anatomy of a lost soul. The hand that did it was very young, very immature; but it had the youth and the immaturity of a Master.

There is another and a very different work, an oil painting, in the Royal Collection at Lisbon, signed IOANNES HOLBEIN FECIT 1519, which, if

by the younger Hans, would almost put the question as to whether the painter knew the landscapes of Italy, beyond doubt ; so southern is the type of its background. The work, however, has been rejected by Woltmann, on the strength of an old photograph not quite perfect. He held the signature to be spurious, and attributed the picture to the school of Gerard David. And he gave to the work the name by which it is now generally styled in English works: "The Fountian of Life" (*Der Brunnen des Lebens*<sup>1</sup>). He did so from the inscription within the rim of the well immediately in the foreground ; but a literal translation of this inscription, PVTEVS AQVARVM VIVENCIVM, is, I think, to be preferred: *The Well of Living Waters*.

The majority of those competent to form a judgment in such matters are inclined to attribute the work to Hans Holbein the Elder, who did not die until some years later, and who made use of a very similar form of signature. And for myself I find it hard to see how anyone familiar with Hans the Younger could accept it as his work at any period of his career ; least

<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to the personal kindness and trouble of Sir Martin Gosselin, K.C.M.G., British Minister at the Court of Portugal, for greatly facilitating my own study of this interesting picture.

of all at the date given in the signature. So that equally whether Woltmann is right in believing the signature itself spurious, or those are right who hold it to be the genuine signature of Hans the Elder,—a more detailed description of the composition does not fall within the scope of this little volume. But the whole matter is most clearly set forth, and a very beautiful reproduction in colours given of the painting itself, in Herr Seeman's article upon it, which will be found in the appended List of References.

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Considerably before 1519, as has been said, Holbein had begun to develop his special genius for Design, and to apply it to glass or window-paintings, as well as to metal and wood-engravings. The beautiful drawings, whether washed, or etched with the point, in chalks or Indian ink, of which examples may be seen in almost every great collection, private as well as public, that year after year were created by that fertile brain and ever more-masterly hand, constitute an Art in themselves. And since so many (perhaps the greater number as well as the greater in subject) of his paintings have perished, it is chiefly in his drawings that the progression of

his powers can be followed, or the plane and scope of his imagination recognised at all. There is seldom a date on them ; but they will be found to date themselves pretty accurately by certain features. In his earliest, for instance, that defect of which mention has been made,—the short thick figures due to the energy of his rebound from Gothic attenuation is a grave fault. There is a Virgin and Child among his washed drawings for glass-paintings in the Basel Museum, for example, which, when you cut it off at the knees, is one of the most charming pictures of Mother and Child to be found in any painter's treatment of this subject. And behind them is a gem of landscape. Yet the whole, as it stands, is utterly marred by the Virgin's dwarfed limbs. But although Holbein never entirely overcame this fault, he did very greatly do so, as the years passed.

His architectural settings, too, tended to greater simplicity in his later years. Yet this is not a safe guide. Some early designs have simple forms ; some comparatively late ones, a very ornate architecture. For the truth is that these architectural backgrounds and settings remained, so long as his fancy had any free field for disporting itself, an integral part of his conception. But only as inseparable

from the Symbolism, the under-tow, of his imagination. To my thinking, at any rate, they make a gravid mistake who look for "realism" in these things.

His stately pillars and arches, his fluid forms of ornament, are not his idea of the actual surroundings of the characters he portrays, any more than they are your idea, or mine, of those surroundings. Is it to be supposed that he thought the dwellings of our Lord were palaces? Or that he could not paint a stable? Those who maintain that Holbein was a Realist in the modern sense of the word must reconcile as best they can the theory with the facts. But when we see the stage set with every stately circumstance,---the Babe amid the fading splendours of earthly palaces, our Lord mocked by matter as well as man,---I dare to think that we shall do well to cease from insisting on an adobe wall, and to study those "incongruous" circumstances to which the will and not the poverty of Holbein consents. We shall, at least, no longer be dull to "the tears of things" as he saw them.

But it would be no less a mistake to think of Holbein as one without a sense of laughter as well. His drawings of open-mouthed peasants gossiping in a summer's nooning, or

dancing in some uncouth frolic,—and still more his romping children, dancing children, and the chase of the fox running off with the goose,—all of these are full of boyish fun. Would that they could be given here without usurping the place of more important works! But that is impossible. And so, too, with the costume-figures of Basel, among which is the charming back view of a citizen's wife, with all the women bent far backward in the odd carriage that was then “the latest fashion” among them.

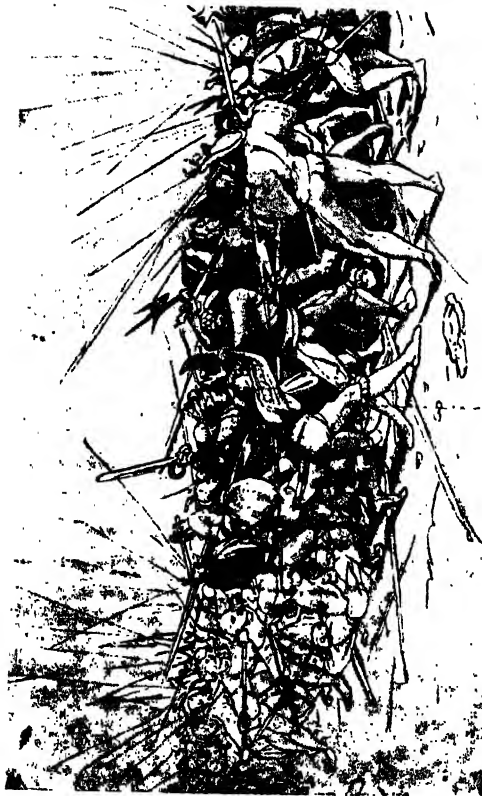
He was particularly happy, also, in his drawings of the *Landsknechte*, those famous Mercenaries of “Blut und Eisen”; always ready to drink a good glass, and a-many; to love a good lass after the same liberal fashion; to troll a good song or fight a good fight; and all with equal zest. He had not mixed with these masterful gentry for nothing; nor they with him to wholly die. There are a number of drawings where they are engaged in combat, too, which show that Holbein's heart leapt to the music of sword and spear as blithely as does Scott's or Dumas's—as blithely as did the hearts of the *Reisläufer* themselves. Look at the mad rush, the hand-to-hand grapple, in a drawing of the Basel Collection, for in-

stance (Plate 7). The blood-lust, the heroism, the savagery, the thrust, the oath, the dust-choked prayer, the forgotten breathing clay under the bloodstained foot; the very clash and din of the fray;—all is told with the brush. And yet not one unnecessary detail squandered. It is as if one watched it from some palpitating refuge, just near enough to see the forefront figures distinctly and to make out the interlocked hubbub and fury where the ranks have been broken through. It would be a great day for Art could we but chance upon some lost painting for which such a study had served its completed purpose.

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On the 3rd of July, 1520, Holbein fulfilled what was then the requirement of almost every guild, and purchased his citizenship; a citizenship to reflect unfading honour on Basel, and of which she has ever been justly proud. And somewhere about the same time he married Elsbeth Schmidt, a tanner's widow, who had one child, Franz.

For the past four or five years Basel had been steadily becoming more and more democratic. And at a period when its *élite* were scholars and printers and civic officials of every origin,—when the illegitimate son of a Rotter-



FIGHT OF LANDSNECHTE  
*Washed Drawing. Basel Museum*





dam doctor was the true prince, and Beatus Rhenanus, the grandson of a butcher, was his worthy second in the reverence of Basel,—the widow and son of a reputable tanner and a rising young artist, who had already the suffrages of the most influential citizens, would find no doors closed to them on the score of social disabilities. The friendship of such men as Erasmus, Froben, Bonifacius Amerbach, and the Mayor,—all conspicuous stars in the Church party,—would have ennobled a man of less genius than Holbein in the eyes of his fellow-citizens; and rightly. But as to the exact locality in which Holbein set up his first married roof-tree—that Bethel of sacred or saddest dreams—no documentary evidence has yet come to light. Circumstantial evidence, however, amounts to a strong probability in favour of the *Rheinhalde* of Great-Basel.

If there was an emblem peculiarly abhorrent to the Basilisk (the Device of Basel) it was the Crescent-and-star. But nothing could better serve to recall the rough outline of Basel in Holbein's day than this very emblem. As the Rhine suddenly swerves from its first wild rush westward and races away, northerly, to the German Ocean, it shapes the hollow of the crescent in which Little-Basel (*Klein-Basel*)

nestled as the star ; and, appropriately enough, since it was here that the Catholic's Star of Faith rallied when overcome across the river, where curved the crescent of Great-Basel (*Gross-Basel*). And the relative proportions of the two would be fairly enough represented by the symbols respectively used.

Great-Basel's northern face was protected by the Rhine, while the stout city wall secured its convex curve. Of this wall the eastern horn was St. Alban's Gate ; its north-west was St. John's Gate (*St. Johann Thor*) ; beside which stood the decaying Commandery of the Knights of Malta, which had contributed a large sum toward the expanded wall, in order to be included within it. And just as these spots still mark the horns of the old crescent, the *Spalen Thor* shows where it had its greatest depth, midway between the other two.

A straight line running due north-east from this Spalen-Thor would cross the big square of the Fish-market (*Fischmarktplatz*) pretty nearly as the uncovered stream of the Birsig, or "Little Birs," did before the quaint little bridge, which then united the two halves of the Fischmarkt, was absorbed in the paving over of stream and square before Holbein's day. This same straight line would of itself draw

the "Old Bridge" (*Alte Brücke*) with approximate exactness, the even then ancient bridge which centred the star of Klein-Basel to its crescent. And in the Historical Museum, where the Barefooted Friars worshipped then, we may still see the grotesque piece of clock-work, the wooden "Stammering King" (*Läl-lenkönig*), that for centuries used hourly to roll great eyes and stick out its tongue a foot long across the river from the Gross-Basel end of the bridge. It is often said that this monster was set up as a public token of the hatred which the triumphant Protestantism of the south bank felt for the stubborn Catholicism of Klein-Basel. But the thing was a famous ancient joke before party feeling turned it into a gibe.

Bonifacius Amerbach's home, the "Emperor's Seat" (*Kaiserstuhl*, now 23, Rheingasse), was in Klein-Basel. Johann Amerbach had bought it, near to his beloved friends, the Carthusians. In 1520 the good old man had slept for six years in the cloisters of the monastery; where to-day the children of the Orphan Asylum play above his grave.

But all the conditions of Holbein's daily life would lead him to prefer Basel proper, and to choose the quarter in which he bought a home

eight years later. This was then the western quarter of Gross-Basel, along the river-face of which ran the high southern and western bank of the Rhine, the *Rheinhalde*, now *St. Johann Vorstadt*. About where the present *Blumenrain* ends stood the arch, or *Schwibbogen*. Further on still stood the "Gate of the Cross" (*Kreuzthor*), by the House of the Brothers of St. Anthony, the ancient *Klösterli* of Basel. Before the Commandery of St. John got themselves included within the city wall the *Kreuzthor* was its western gate. The whole district of *se Crüze*, so called because its boundaries were crosses before towers replaced them, has however become absorbed in the *St. Johann Vorstadt*, while the *Kreuzthor* has disappeared altogether. The quarter was a favourite one with members of the Fishers' Guild and with decent folk of small means.

As early as 1517 the Fishers' Company had extended itself so greatly as to become a notable institution of the *Vorstadt*, including many members from Klein-Basel also; while its military record was a proud one. But it was in this year, while Holbein was making his visit to Lucerne and beyond, that this guild took the more truly descriptive name which it bears to this day, that of the "*Vorstadt*

Association" (*Vorstadtgesellschaft*). And to this association, which in after years gave him a famous banquet, Holbein, we know, belonged later on, if not now.

Every day would take him to the Fischmarkt, —the great square humming with activity, crowded with inns, public-houses, shops, booths, dwelling-houses,—the trade mart of every nationality. The Cornmarkt near by, now the *Marktplatz*, with its almost finished Rathaus, was the centre of official civic life. When the great bell clanged on the Rathaus, and its flag was flung out, not only every professional soldier, but every guild and every male above fourteen, knew his appointed place at the wall, and took it. But every day, and all day, the Fischmarkt flung out its peaceful standards, or rallied men to this side or to that with the tocsin of its presses,—the old Amerbach printing-house "of the Settle" (*zum Sessel*), which was Johann Froben's home and printing-house in 1520.

Morning after morning, and year upon year, Holbein turned his back upon St. Johanthor, and walked eastward along the Rheinhalde; —the river racing toward him on his left hand, the University rising in front of him beyond the bridge, and the delicate Cathedral towers

beyond the University. For the Basel Minster was still the Cathedral of the great See of Basel. Passing the wall of the Dominican Cemetery, on which was painted the ancient Dance of Death with which his own after-creations were so often to be confused, Holbein must many a time have studied the famous old copy. For though the Dominican painting was then nearly a century old, it was a copy of a still older original in the Klein-Basel nunnery of *Klingenthal*, a community under Dominican direction.

But he would pass another spot—one day to be of far more living importance to him. In 1520 it was a corn warehouse, known by the name of *ze Crüz*, which belonged to Adam Petri, the printer, who had inherited it from his uncle, the famous printer Johann Petri, by whose ingenious improvements the art of printing was so greatly facilitated. Two years later, in 1522, Froben bought this granary, *ze Crüz*, and converted it into the book-magazine which was known all over Europe as “Froben’s Book-house.” And in this latter year Adam Petri, greatly to Luther’s disgust, pirated Luther’s translation of the New Testament, which had appeared three months before.

Holbein drew a superb title-page, ante-dated 1523, for this "enterprise" of Petri—the New Testament "now right faithfully rendered into German,"—with the symbols of the Evangelists at the four corners, the arms of Basel at the top, the device of the printer at the foot, and the noble figures of St. Paul and St. Peter on either side; figures which will bear comparison with Dürer's "Four Temperaments" of a later date. Later still he designed another striking title-page for Thomas Wolff's translation; and his beautiful title-pages and ornaments for Froben, with whom his connection was not a temporary matter such as these others, would need a volume to themselves.

Holbein's only rival, if he could be called such, in work of this sort was the talented goldsmith, Urs Graf, who, as an exceedingly loose fish, lived most appropriately in the Fischmarkt in his own house near the old Birsig Bridge, when he was not in the lock-up for one or another of his constant brawls and scandals. But to compare the best work of both is to recognise a difference in kind as well as degree: the essential difference between even negligent genius and the most elaborate talent. High talent Urs Graf had unquestionably; though stamped,—I think,—with the lawless caprices of his own



character. Holbein's every design has not only what Urs Graf lacked—that ordered imagination which is Style—but over and above all, the subtle expression of Power.

Many a time, too, just where he would turn away from the Rhine for the business centre of Gross-Basel, the artist would make some little pause at the old "Flower" Inn (*sur Blume*), which gave its name to the Blumenplatz, and is still commemorated in the greatly extended Blumenrain of to-day. All the world now knows the famous hotel of "The Three Kings"; and where it reaches nearest to the Old Bridge stood the "Blume" of Holbein's time, even then the oldest of the Basel inns. This Blume, not to be confused with later inns of the same name, shared with its no less famous contemporary,—“The Stork,” in the Fischmarkt,—the special patronage of the chief printers. Basilius Amerbach, for instance, the brother of Holbein's friend Bonifacius, lived at the Blume; and often the painter must have turned in for a friendly glass with him and a chat about Bonifacius, away at his law studies in Avignon.

As for the Stork, its very rooms were named in remembrance of the envoys and merchant traders who flocked to it on all great occasions. There was a "Cologne Room," for instance,

and a "Venetian Room," among many others. The men of Venice, indeed, had a particular affection for it. Here Holbein met with all nationalities, and learned much of the great centres of other countries. Here came all the Basel magnates and printers. And here, a few years later on, came that bizarre personage who was for a very brief time Basel's "town physician," the Paracelsus Theophrastus Bombastus to whom we owe our word *bombastic*. Holbein was on a visit to England during the latter's short tenure of office, when the combined scholarship and poverty of Oporinus made him the hack of Paracelsus and the victim of many a petty tyranny. At that time Oporinus,—the son of that Hans Herbster, painter, whose portrait is now attributed to Ambrose Holbein,—was glad to place his remarkable knowledge of Greek at Froben's service. He was not yet a printer, as later when Holbein drew a clever device for him. And neither he nor the painter could know that one day the daughter of Bonifacius Amerbach should marry him out of sheer pity for his unhappy old age,—somewhat as he himself, when but a lad of twenty, married an aged Xantippe from gratitude.

But in 1520, when Holbein was just married,

Oporinus was still a student and Bonifacius unmarried. Erasmus, too, did not permanently take up his home with Froben until the following year, and was now at Louvain. Yet what a true university was that little house *zum sessel* (now 3, Todtengässlein, the little lane where the old post-office stood) to an intelligence such as Holbein's ! And what a circle was that of Froben's staff ! From Froben himself, above whom Erasmus alone could tower in scholarship, down through every member to the youngest, and from such men as Gerard Lystrius on the one hand and the literally "Beatus" Rhenanus on the other, what things were not to be learned !

And what discussions those were that drew each man to give of his best in the common talk ! Venice sent news of the "unspeakable" Turk, whom she had such good cause to watch and dread. For fifty years his name had ceased to blanch the cheek of other nations ; but now it was said, and said truly, that the dying Selim, "the Grim," had forged a thunderbolt which Suleyman II. would not be slow to hurl. No man could know the worst or dared predict the end, as to that Yellow Terror of Holbein's time. And closer still, to keen eyes, were the threats of the coming Peasant Terror. Wur-

temberg had batted down the flames, it is true; but the deck of Europe was hot under foot with the passions that were soon to make the Turks' atrocities seem gentle in comparison.

The death of Maximilian and the election of Charles V. were a year old now. But none knew better than the Basel printers how much the League of Swabia and the Swiss Confederation had weighed in the close contest of claims between those three strangely youthful competitors for the Emperor's crown;—Charles, but nineteen; Francis I., one-and-twenty; and Henry VIII., not twenty-five. Basel also knew that Charles had only bought his triumph by swearing to summon the Diet of Worms. All the more, therefore, was she intensely alive to the possible issues of the Arabian-Nights-Entertainment which had but just concluded on the dreary Calais flats when Holbein became one of Basel's citizens. Erasmus had come back full of it. Marco Polo's best wonders made but a dingy show beside the "Field of the Cloth of Gold," where in this June the two defeated candidates for imperial honours had kissed each other midway between the ruined moat of Guisnes and the rased battlements of Arde.

Then, on top of this, came the rumours of the

English King's undertaking to answer Luther's most formidable attack on Rome. It was in 1520, the year after his great disputation with Eck at Leipzig, that Luther published his cataclysmic addresses: "To the Christian Nobles of Germany" and "On the Babylonian Captivity,"—the latter of which itself contains the whole Protestant Reformation in embryo. "Would to God," exclaimed Erasmus of it, "that he had followed my counsel and abstained from odious and seditious proceedings!" Bishop Tunstall, then in Worms, had also written of it:—"I pray God keep that book out of England!" But before the year was out "that book" had reached England, and Henry VIII. had sworn to annihilate its arguments and to triumphantly defend the dogmas of Rome. The eagerly-awaited "Defence" did not get printed, and in Pope Leo's hands for a year yet. But Basel knew, through More and Erasmus,—whose canny smile probably discounted its critical quality,—pretty much its line of defence. Nor was Froben's circle one whit more surprised than its royal author when its immediate reward was that formal style and title—*Defender of the Faith*,—to which a few years more were to lend so different a significance.

By this latter date Ulrich von Hutten had fled to Basel, only to find that his violent "heresies" had completely estranged Erasmus, and closed Froben's door, as well as all other Roman Catholic doors, against him for ever. He lodged, therefore, at the Blume until the Basel Council requested him to leave the town, a little before his death, in 1523. But in 1520 Hutten was still at Sickingen's fortress, digging with fierce ardour the impassable gulf between him and the band of friends and Churchmen among whom Holbein ever ranged himself.

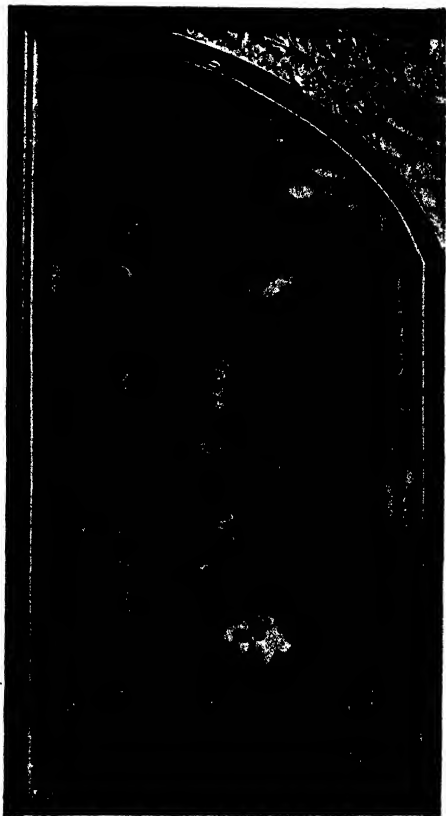
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Among the five lost works which Patin says Holbein painted, there was a "Nativity" and an "Adoration of the Kings." It is impossible now to say what resemblances, if any, existed between these and the same subjects, executed not much later, which are now in the University Chapel, Freiburg Minster. These latter are the only known works of Holbein that still hang in a sacred edifice. They were evidently designed to fold in upon a central altar-piece with an arched top, thus making, when open, the usual triptych; but the central painting has vanished. This large work was a gift to the Carthusian monastery in Klein-Basel;

and the arms of the donor, Hans Oberriedt, are displayed below the Nativity, as well as the portraits of himself and his six sons. Below the corresponding right wing, the Adoration, are the arms of his wife and her portrait, with her four daughters.

In both wings what I can only describe as the atmosphere of Infancy,—and a touching atmosphere it is too—is strengthened by keeping all the figures small and heightening this suggestion by contrast with a grandiose architecture. In both, too, the sacred scenes reveal themselves like visions unseen by the Oberriedt family, who face outward toward the altar and are supposed to be lighted by the actual lights of the church. The whole work must once have been a glorious creation, with its rich colours, its beautiful architectural forms, and its mingling of purest imagination with realism. What would one not give to see the lost work these wings covered?

In the left wing, the Nativity (Plate 8), Holbein has remarkably anticipated the lighting of Correggio's famous masterpiece, not finished until years after this must have been painted, by the conditions of Oberriedt's history and Basel's as well. The Light that is to light the world lights up the scene with an exquisite enchant-



THE NATIVITY

*Oils. University Chapel, Freiburg Cathedral*





ing softness,—yet so brilliantly that the very lights of heaven seem dimmed in comparison. The moon, in Holbein's deliberate audacity, seems but a disc as she bows her face, too, in worship. Shining by some compulsion of purest Nature, the divine radiance glows on the ecstatic Mother; and away above and beyond her—"How far that little candle shines," and shines, and shines again amid the shadows! It illumines the beautiful face of the Virgin, touches the reverent awe of St. Joseph, plays over marble arch and pillar, discovers the wondering shepherd peering from behind the pillar on the left, and irradiates the angel in the distance, hastening to carry the "glad tidings." The happy cherubs behind the Child rejoice in it; and as they spring forward one notices how Holbein has boldly discarded the conventional, and attached their pinions as if these were a natural development of the arm instead of a separate member.

The same union of unfettered fancy symbolism and realism displays itself throughout the right wing,—where the Virgin is enthroned in front of crumbling palaces. The sun's rays form a great star, of such dazzling light that one of the attendants shades his eyes to look upward, and an old man with a noble head,

wearing an ermine cape, presents his offering as the chief of the three kings; while a Moorish sovereign, dressed in white, makes a splendid figure as he waits to kneel with his gift, and his greyhound stands beside him. The colouring of both paintings must have had an extraordinary beauty when the painter laid down his brush.

To carp at such conceptions because their architecture is as imaginative and as deeply symbolical as the action, is to demand that Holbein shall be someone else. These pictures, beyond the portraits below them, are the farthest possible from aiming at what we demand of Realism, though their own realism is astonishing. Holbein all too seldom sounds them, but when he does choose to stir only a joyous elation in the heart he rings a peal of silver bells. Here all is glad thanksgiving. The Divine has come into a sick and sorry world; and, behold, all is changed! Nothing sordid, nothing shabby, consists with the *meaning* of this miracle. Therefore it is not here. All is transformed; all is a New Jerusalem—splendour, peace, ineffable and mysterious Beauty.

With the dominance of the anti-Catholic party, which unseated Meyer zum Hasen in

I



*Gethsemane*

II



*The Kiss of Judas*

THE PASSION  
*Eight-panelled Altar-piece*  
*Old. Basel Museum*



III



*Before Pontius Pilate*

IV



*The Scourging*

THE PASSION  
*Eight-panelled Altar-piece*  
*Oils. Basel Museum*



V



*The Mocking*

VI



*The Way to Calvary*

THE PASSION  
*Eight-panelled Altar-piece*  
*Oils. Basel Museum*





PLATE 9—continued

VII



*"It is finished"*

VIII



*The Entombment*

THE PASSION

*Eight-panelled Altar-piece  
Oils, Basel Museum*



1521, his friend Oberriedt also fell into trouble. And soon after Erasmus and Bonifacius Amerbach,—disgusted with the iconoclast fanaticism of 1528 and 1529,—took refuge in Catholic Freiburg-in-the-Breisgau, Oberriedt also left Basel for that city. He took these wings with him to save them from the destruction which probably overtook the central work. The latter was, perhaps, too large to conceal or get away. During the Thirty Years' War they were again removed, and safeguarded at Schaffhausen. And so great was their fame that they were twice expressly commanded to be brought before a sovereign; once to Munich, to be seen by Maximilian of Bavaria; and again to Ratisbon for the Emperor Ferdinand III. In 1798 they were looted by the French, and were only restored to Freiburg in 1808.

Another great religious picture, once no less renowned than Oberriedt's altar-paintings, has suffered a worse fate. This is the eight-panelled altar-piece of the Passion, now in the Basel Museum (Plate 9). So far back as is known it was preserved, probably after being hidden from the fury that attacked all church pictures, in the Râthaus. Maximilian I., of Bavaria, the zealous collector of Dürer's works, offered almost any price for this altar-

piece by Dürer's great contemporary. But Basel, unlike Nuremberg, was not to be bribed; and the world-famous painting remained to draw art-lovers from every country in Europe. Nor did the most competent judges fail to envy Basel her jewel, and to eulogise its perfections. Painters such as Sandrart, looking at it after it had survived a hundred and fifty years of vicissitude, could exclaim: "It is a work in which the utmost that our art is capable of may be found; yielding the palm to none, whether of Germany or Italy, and justly wearing the laurel-wreath among the works of former times."

Alas! this laurel, too, has been filched from Holbein's fame. In 1771 the altar-piece was consigned to the collection where it now is; and it was then decided to gild the gold and paint the lily. The work was subjected to one of those crude "restorations" which respect nothing save the frame. And no monarch will ever again compete for its possession. Red is over red and blue over blue, doubtless; but in place of Holbein's rich harmony a jangle of gaudy conflicting colours now sets one's teeth on edge. So that only in a photograph can one even enjoy the composition—all that is left of the Master.

But here it can be seen with what art the painter has so combined eight separate and distinct pictures, each a gem, into one, by such a distribution and balance that the whole is as integral as a pearl. The scene on the Mount of Olives, which a great critic once pronounced worthy to compare with Correggio's work, is only to be surpassed by the Entombment. And in every scene—what freedom, action, verve! From the first to the last all passes with the swift step of Calamity, yet all with noble dignity.

The Basel Museum possesses also a set of ten washed drawings in Indian ink,—scenes of the Passion designed for glass-painting,—which must be conned and conned again before one can “know” Holbein at all in his deepest moods. They are a great Testament, though they seem unbearably harsh at a superficial glance. But put aside your own ideas and humbly study the ideas of Holbein,—sure that they must be well worth the reverence of yours or mine,—and little by little you will be made free of that Underworld where Holbein's true self has its home; you will pierce its gloom and find its clue and understand its tongue. It is a small matter whether you and I find ourselves in sympathy with that world, or

can never be acclimatised. The great matter, the only matter, is to understand it; to see in its skeletons something more than lively bones, in its graves something besides Horror.

Without mastering the logical sequence of these ten drawings,—where scene by scene the Divine recedes before our eyes, and the Son of Man assumes more and more the whole burden of Sin and Death,—it is inevitable that the life-size painting of Christ in the Grave, also in the Basel Museum (Plate 10), should seem just a ghastly and “unpardonable” piece of realism. Realism of the most ghastly truthfulness, as to a corpse in the grave, it certainly is. But although it may be questioned whether such a picture should ever be painted, no one who looks through the form to the thought that shapes it would pronounce even this awful utterance “unpardonable.”

There have been those who could see in this dead Christ,—lying rigid in a green sarcophagus that throws over the waxen flesh the ghastly threat of that decay which would follow if no miracle intervened,—there have been those, I say, who could see in it only superb technique. And others see only the negation of all idealism, if not of all faith.

PLATE 10



CHRIST IN THE GRAVE  
*Oil, Basel Museum*





Yet put this painting,—the acme of technical beauty as well as of ruthless realism,—at the close of the ten Passion drawings, and I venture to believe that the one coherent conception that runs through them all will legitimately find its conclusion here.

Here He lies that surrendered Himself to the punishment of Sin and the penalty of Death—for all men and all time. His pale lips are set with the superhuman agony of the cry with which He paid the uttermost farthing of that bond. Man has died for man, martyrs for faith ; here God has died unto Himself, for us. There has been no playing at death. All the pitiless terrors of the grave are here, with Him who for love of us has chosen to know Mortality “like at all points” with mortal men. What He bore for us, shall we shrink from so much as realising? The great eyes are fixed in a look whose penetrating, almost liquid sweetness not even the rigor of the final anguish could obliterate. Divine devotion,—devotion more than mortal,—still lingers in those sockets. The heart may well dilate before this sight ; the soul fall on its knees. By each of those bloodstained steps, by the sting of this death, we have been paid for. Here, here only,—as Holbein saw it,—is the leverage the heathen

philosopher vainly sighed for to move the world ; God's leverage, Infinite Love.

This is anything but a theological tangent. A great artist has bequeathed us his beliefs,—drawn and painted in many works, with every patient, virile, expressive power at his command. There has been enough and to spare of shrieks or scoffs. A little humility and a little study is in place, too. For the rest, let us not forget that this large painting was made for some altar ; and that many a weeping penitent, many a devout heart, has been pierced with its message. On the edge of the stone coffin, which is tinted a warm green within, and lit by some opening at the foot, is the inscription in gold letters : “JESUS NAZARENUS REX JUDÆORUM.” The stigmata are painted with unsparing truth. The work is dated 1521.

There is in the Hampton Court Gallery a little painting which has only comparatively recently been recognised as Holbein's, but which forms the beautiful and fitting close of this set of religious pictures. As is the case with so many of his works, the critics are not unanimous upon it. But the authorities who have no doubts as to its being a genuine Holbein of this period are so weighty that

I need not argue the point in support of my own convictions.

In the Hampton Court Catalogue it is styled "Mary Magdalen at our Lord's Sepulchre," but I prefer to call it the Risen Christ (Plate 11). It must once have been supremely beautiful; for even now its ideal loveliness shines through all the evil fortunes which have once again defaced the handiwork of Holbein. The type of Christ, and indeed the work throughout, bears a marked resemblance to the eight-panelled Basel altar-piece.

The painter has chosen the moment recorded in the twentieth chapter of St. John. In that early dawn, "when it was yet dark," Mary has brought spikenard in a marble cup, if not to anoint the sacred Dead at least to pour it on the threshold of the sealed tomb, with tears and prayers. She has fled to tell St. John and St. Peter of the sacrilege of the open tomb,—has followed them back, still mechanically clasping her useless spikenard,—has seen them go in where her trembling knees refused to follow, and then go homeward, as we can see them in the distance, arguing the almost incredible fact.

Poor Mary has had no heart for discussion. She has stayed weeping by the empty grave

until two pitying angels have appeared to recall her from despair, and she has "turned herself back,"—too frightened to stay for comfort. And then she has seen near her a Face, a Form, she was too dazed to recognise until the unforgettable Voice has thrilled through her, and she has flung herself forward with the old, instinctive cry, "Master!" to touch, to clasp that Hand, so dear, so familiar, so all-protecting, and find it a reality.

It is this tremendous moment that Holbein has seized. And with what exquisite feeling for every detail of the scene, every great emotion! Had the painting been preserved, as it deserved to be, surely it too could claim a part of that laurel wreath which Sandrart averred could not be torn from the Basel altar-piece by any rival, whether Italian or German.

The misty landscape, with the crosses of Golgotha and the eastern hills catching the first brightness of the new Day dawning over mortality; the broken clouds of night, scattered like the conquered horrors of the grave, and the illuminated tomb where Hope and Faith henceforth ask us why we weep; the hurrying agitation of St. Peter and the trusting serenity of St. John, expressed in every gesture; the dusky trees; Mary's quivering doubt and



THE RISEN CHRIST  
*Oil. Hampton Court Gallery*



rapture, touched with some new awe; and the simple majesty with which our Lord stays that unconscious innocent presumption, *Touch me not.*

What forbidding tenderness in that Face lighted by the grave He has passed through! What a subtle yet eloquent suggestion of the eternal difference, henceforth, between Love and love is in these mortal lineaments that have evermore resumed their divinity! No face, no type, no art, can ever realise Christ; yet when this little painting was first added to the great roll of Holbein *Basiliensis*, it must have gone as near to realising its subject as the colours of earth can go.

But every man, happily for himself, has a material as well as an immaterial world with which he must be concerned. To transpose Bagehot's profound little saying,—Each man dines in a room apart, but we all go down to dinner together. And though Holbein knew the pinch of narrow means, he had no lack of good cheer as well as austere food in his art.

On March 12th, 1521, the Great Council held its first meeting in the new Rathaus; and Meyer zum Hasen, who presided over it as Burgo-master, entrusted to his protégé the enviable task of decorating the Council Chamber. Fifty-



six years after Holbein's work was completed these wall-paintings were described as "representations of the noblest subjects—done by the German Apelles." By this title the painter was everywhere recognised throughout the greater part of his lifetime.

In all, there would seem to have been six large pictures or set pieces; but two were not done until years later. One wall being too broken up by windows to be suitable, there remained three,—of which "the back wall" adjoining Meyer's house was not touched at this time. Ostensibly the reason was want of funds; but as a matter of fact the Protestant party (to anticipate this name), which grew strong enough to unseat Meyer before the year was out, was at this time indifferent to art when not positively inimical to it.

Whether treating a façade or an interior it was Holbein's custom to make a flat wall-space assume the most solid-looking forms of Renaissance architecture. Iselin once said of a façade of Holbein's, that there was a dog painted on it so naturally that the dogs in the street would run up and bark at it. And so astounding was the realism with which he threw out balconies, and added windows, cornices, and statues, and the richest carvings, pillars, arches, and vistas

of every sort, that no eye could credit them with illusion. Horses neighed in the court-yards, flowers bloomed in the gardens, dogs leaped beside master or mistress, and children played in the spacious balconies, or moved to and fro between the splendid marble pillars and the distant wall. To study the copies that remain of such works is to be astounded by their feats of perspective.

Inside would be kindred illusions. Large pictures would seem to be actually taking place without, and beheld through beautifully carved archways or windows; while the apparent walls would have niches filled with superb marble statues and the ceiling be supported by pillars, behind which people walked and talked or leaned out to watch the chief scenes.

And so it was with the Council Chamber. But nothing now remains of these works except fragments and a few drawings for the principal features. So far as can be judged, each wall had two large scenes; the four pictures of this period being chosen from the heroic legends of the *Gesta Romanorum*; the two painted later, from the Old Testament.

But while these large works were going forward Holbein was busy with many others; private commissions for Froben, occasionally

for other printers, and for altar-pieces or portraits. All through his life his industry and accomplishment left him small time for leisure or the dissipations of leisure. Nor is there any year of his life when his work does not attest a clear eye and a firm hand. These things are their own certificate of conduct ; at any rate, of "worldly" conduct.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1522 occurred two important events in his life. His first child, the son he called Philip, was born ; and he painted an altar-piece which is in some respects the most beautiful of his extant works. The latter—now in the Solothurn Museum, and therefore called the "Solothurn Madonna" (Plate 12)—has had one of the most extraordinary histories to be found in the records of art.

The background of this picture,—a massive arch of grey sandstone supported by iron stanchions,—was evidently designed to suit the surrounding architecture of some grey-walled ancient structure. On a dais covered with a green carpet, patterned in white and red and emblazoned with the arms of the donor and his wife, sits the lovely Madonna with the Child held freely yet firmly in two of the most exquisite hands which even Holbein ever painted. Her



THE SOLOTHURN, OR ZETTER'SCHE, MADONNA  
*Oil. Solothurn Museum*



dress is a rich rose-red ; her symbolical mantle of universal Motherhood, or " Grace," is a most beautiful ultramarine, loaded in the shadows and like a sapphire in its lights. The flowing gold of her hair shimmers under its filmy veil, and the jewels in her gold crown flash below the great white pearls that tip its points. Where the sky-background approaches Mother and Child, its azure tone is lost in a pure effulgence of light ; as if the very ether were suffused with the sense of the Divine.

The Child is drawn and painted superbly. The carnations are exquisite ; the gravity of infancy is not exaggerated, yet fittingly enforces the gesture of benediction. The left hand is turned outward in a movement so peculiar to happy, vigorous babyhood that it is a marvel of observation and nature. The little foot is admirably foreshortened, and the wrinkled sole a bit of inimitable painting. But perhaps most wonderful of all is the art with which, amid so many splendid details, the Child is the centre of interest as well as of the picture. How it is so, is Holbein's own secret.

To right and left of the Virgin stand two fine types of spiritual and temporal authority. Behind and at her right, almost hidden by the amplitude of her mantle, kneels a poor wretch

who is introduced here by some necessity of the commission itself, but is skilfully prevented from obtruding his needs on the serene beauty of the scene. Dropping gold into his alms-bowl with a hand effectively contrasted with his brown thumb, stands "the sinner's saint"—the good Bishop of Tours; while some other condition of the work has embroidered St. Martin's red mitre with the figure of St. Nicholas. There is one other striking circumstance about St. Martin; and that is that, although he is in the Virgin's presence, he wears the violet chasuble of an Intercessor. The chasuble is lined with red, and it and the rich vestments, on which scenes of the Passion are displayed, are the patient verisimilitude of ancient vestments. In St. Martin's gloved left hand is his crozier and the right glove, which he has drawn off to bestow his alms.

Opposite to him stands the patron-saint of Solothurn,—St. Ursus, a hero of the Theban legend,—dressed from head to foot in a suit of magnificently painted armour. His left hand grasps his sword-hilt; his right supports the great red flag with its white cross. Nor is that flag of the year 1522 the least interesting detail of this work. With the crimson reflections of the flag streaking the cold gleams of his

glittering armour, his stern dark face and the white plumes tossing to his shoulder, St. Ursus is a figure that may well leave historical accuracy to pedants. Below his foot are the initials H.H., and the date, 1522; as if cut into the stone.

This work was commissioned by Hans Gerster, for many years Town Archivist of Basel, in which capacity he had to convey important state papers to other councils with which that of Basel had negotiations. From this it came about that from the year when Basel entered the Swiss Confederation, in 1501, Gerster was almost as much at home in the "City of Ambassadors" as in his own, and the Dean or *Probst* of the Solothurn Cathedral—the "Cathedral of St. Ursus and St. Victor"—became not only his spiritual director, but one of his most intimate friends. Many circumstances which cannot be given here make it pretty evident that in 1522 Gerster, probably under the advice of the *Probst*, the Coadjutor Nicholas von Diesbach, made this picture an *expiatory* offering for some secret sin of grave proportions. There are hints that point to treachery to the Basel troops, in the Imperial interests, sympathy with which finally cost him, as well as his friend Meyer zum Hasen, his



official position. Gerster himself was not a native of Basel, although his wife, Barbara Guldenknopf, was.

Be this as it may, it is apparently in direct connection with this confessed sin that "the sinner's saint," St. Martin of Tours, is chosen as Intercessor for Gerster, wearing the prescribed chasuble for this office. And it seems likely that the addition to his mitre of the figure of St. Nicholas was Gerster's wish, in order to specially associate the name-saint of his friend—Nicholas von Diesbach—with this intercession. It is assumed by those who have patiently unearthed these details of circumstantial evidence, that the beggar is introduced to mark the identity of the boundlessly charitable Bishop of Tours. But I venture to suggest still another reason: this is, that in the uplifted, pleading face of the mendicant, whose expression of appeal and humility is a striking bit of realism in these ideal surroundings, we may have the actual portrait of the donor, Hans Gerster himself. That this should be so would be in strict accord with the methods of the period. There is a striking parallel which will occur to all who are familiar with the St. Elizabeth in the St. Sebastian altar-piece at Munich. Here the undoubted portrait of Hans

Holbein the elder is seen as the beggar in the background.

It is, as has been said, a marvellous story by which this glorious painting, - in which the introduction of the patron-saint of Solothurn proves that it was created for one of her own altars, - was completely lost to her, and to the very histories of Art, and then returned to the city for which it was originally destined ; all by a chain of seemingly unrelated accidents. But only the skeleton of that story can be given here.<sup>1</sup>

In all probability this Madonna was executed for the altar of the ancient Lady Chapel of the Solothurn Cathedral. A hundred and twenty-six years after it was painted, this chapel was pulled down, to be replaced by a totally different style of architecture ; and as the picture was then smoke-stained and "old-fashioned" it would in all likelihood drop into some lumber-room. At all events, it must have become the property of the Cathedral choirmaster, - one Hartmann,

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the personal kindness of the discoverer's son, Herr Direktor Zetter-Collin of the Solothurn Museum, for these details. But the whole story, as well as Herr Zetter-Collin's contributions to the history of the work, should be read in his own absorbingly interesting monograph : - "*Die zettlers'chen Madonna vom Solothurn : ihre Geschichte, etc.*" 1902.

—after another five-and-thirty years. For at this time he built, and soon after endowed, the little village church of Allerheiligen, on the outskirts of the industrial town of Grenchen, which lies at the southern foot of the Jura.

*Facilis descensus!* Another turn of the centuries' wheel and the gift of this chapel's founder was once again thought unworthy of the altar to which it had been presented. When Herr Zetter of Solothurn first saw it in the queer little Allerheiligen chapel, it hung high up on the choir wall; blackened, worm-eaten, without a frame, suspended by a string passed through two holes which had been bored through the painted panel itself. Yet his acute eye was greatly interested by it. And when, during an official visit in 1864, he heard that the chapel was undergoing a drastic renovation, he was concerned for the fate of the discoloured old painting. At first it could not be discovered at all. Finally he found it, face downward, spotted all over with whitewash, under the rough boards that served for the workmen's platform. A few hours later and it, too, would have been irrevocably gone; carted away with the "old rubbish"!

He examined it, made out the signature, knew that this might mean either any one of

a number of painters who used it, or a clumsy copy or forgery, yet had the courage of his conviction that it was Holbein's genuine work. He bought it of the responsible authority, who was glad to be rid of four despised paintings, for the cost of all the new decorations. He had expert opinion, which utterly discouraged his belief; but stuck to it, took the risks of having it three long years (so rotten was its whole condition) under repairs which might at any moment collapse with it, yet leave their tremendous expenses behind to be settled just the same; and finally found himself the possessor of a perfectly restored chef-d'œuvre of Holbein's brush, which, from the first, Herr Zetter devoted to the Museum (now a fine new one) of Solothurn.

To day this work, which some forty years ago no one dreamed had ever existed, smiles in all the beauty of its first painting; a monument to the insight and generous enthusiasm of the gentleman whose name is rightly connected with its own in its official title—"The Zetter-Madonna of Solothurn." And it smiles with Holbein's own undebased handiwork throughout. *Pace* Woltmann's blunder,—its network of fine cracks, even over the Virgin's face, attests that it has suffered no over-paint-

ing. The work has been mounted on a solid back, the greatest fissures and the holes filled up to match their surroundings, the stains and defacements of neglect cleared away, and the triumph is complete. It might well be the "swan song" of a veteran artist at such work. Whatever the mistakes of Eigener's career, the restoration of the Solothurn Madonna was a flawless achievement for himself and his associates.

This work, too, is the most precious of all that have come down to us of Holbein's imaginative compositions, from the fact that his first-born, Philip, who was born about 1522, was the model for the Child, and that a portrait of Elsbeth, his wife, served as a study for the Virgin. This portrait is an unnamed and unsigned drawing in silver-point and Indian ink, heightened with touches of red chalk, now in the Louvre Collection. (Plate 13.)

That this is a portrait of Holbein's wife any careful comparison with her portrait at Basel must establish. Feature for feature, allowing for the changes of sufficient years, the two faces are one and the same. The very line of the shoulder, setting of the head, and even the outline of the fashion in which the low dress is cut, is alike in both. And equally unmistakable



UNNAMED PORTRAIT-STUDY: NOT CATALOGUED AS HOLBEIN'S  
*Silver-point and Indian-ink. Louvre Collection*

*Believed by the writer to be Holbein's drawing of his wife before her  
first marriage, and the model for the Solothurn Madonna*



is the relation between this Louvre drawing and the Madonna of Solothurn.

Yet I am unable to accept Woltmann's theory that the drawing was made in 1522 "for" the Virgin. He assumes that the lettering which borders the bodice in this drawing—ALS. IN. ERN. ALS. IN. . . .—and the braids in which the hair is worn are simply some "fancy" dress. But surely if ever hair bore the stamp of unstudied, even ugly custom, it does so here. Then, too, Woltmann himself, as are all who adopt this explanation, is unable to reconcile the oldest age which can be assigned to this sitter with the youngest that can be assumed for the Basel painting of 1529 upon a hypothesis of only seven years' interval. Temperament and trouble can do much in seven years; but not so much as this. I say *temperament* advisedly; because all the evidence of Holbein's life substantiates the assertion of Van Mander, who had it from Holbein's own circle of contemporaries,—that the painter's life was made wretched by her violent temper. We shall find him far from blameless in later years; but though it may not excuse him, his unhappy home must largely explain his alienation.

Yet that it can explain such an alteration



as that between the Louvre drawing and the Basel portrait I do not believe. Nor could I persuade myself either that any married woman of the sixteenth century wore her hair in that most exclusive and invariable of Teuton symbols—"maiden" plaits;—or that any husband ever thought it necessary to advertise upon a picture of his wife that he held her "in all honour."

Myself, I must believe, then, that this portrait was made years before 1522; probably in the young painter's first months in Basel, in 1515; and thus some fourteen years before the Basel group of 1529 was painted. It may well have been that some serious misunderstanding between them was at the bottom of that otherwise inexplicable departure in 1517, and the two years' absence in Lucerne and still more southern cities. Of course this is mere guesswork; so is every hypothesis until it is proved. But all the simple commonplaces of first love, estrangement, separation, and a renewed betrothal after Elsbeth's early widowhood with one child, could easily have run a natural course between 1515 and their marriage, somewhere about 1520.

As for the inscription,—it is a detail that Woltmann thinks represents a repetition of

the one phrase, and that I imagine it to have suggested what for some reason Holbein did not wish to proclaim:—"In all honour. [In all love.]" But nothing can shake my conviction that in it we hear the faint far-off echoes from some belfry in Holbein's own city of Îs. The realities of that chime are buried,—whether well or ill,—four hundred years deep in the seas that roll over that submerged world of his youth and passion. But living emotion, we may be sure, went to the writing and the treasuring of this pledge to Elsbeth or himself; a pledge redeemed when she became his wife.

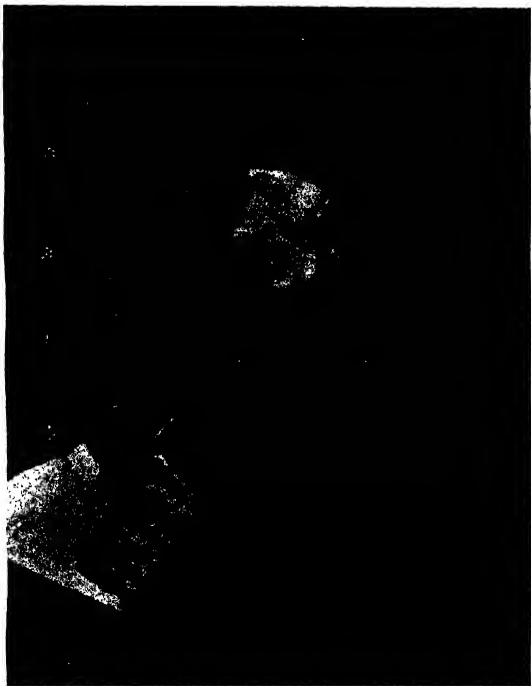
Thus for the altar-piece of 1522 there would be this portrait of Elsbeth in her girlhood ready to his hand. But even so, see how he has idealised it, made a new creature of it, all compact of exquisite ideals! He has eliminated the subtle sensuousness which has its own allure in the drawing. Every trait is refined, purified, vivified, raised to another plane of character. Genius has put the inferior elements into its retort, and transmuted them to some heavenly metal far enough from Holbein's home-life.

Throughout all these years, as has been said, he was busy for the printers also. In

1522 he drew the noble title-page for Petri's edition of Luther's New Testament, with the figures of St. Peter and St. Paul at either side, of which mention has been made. And in Thomas Wolff's edition of 1523 there is a series of his designs. His alphabets, borders, illustrations of all sorts, continued to enrich the Basel press from this date, and were often borrowed by printers in other cities. In 1523 there came to Basel that masterly wood-cutter who has been already referred to,—Hans Lützelburger. And from this time on, therefore, Holbein's designs may be seen in their true beauty.

He had painted, besides portraits of Froben and others, at least three portraits of Erasmus by 1524. For in June of this year the latter writes to his friend Pirkheimer, at Nürnberg, to say that he has sent two of these portraits by the "most accomplished painter" to England; while the artist himself, he adds, has conveyed still a third to France.

The smaller of the two sent to England, two-thirds the size of life, is probably the one now in the Louvre (Plate 14). It is a masterpiece of penetration and technique. Erasmus is here seen in the most unaffected simplicity of dress and pose; in profile against a dark-



ERASMUS  
*Oils. The Louvre*



green tapestry patterned with light green, and red and white flowers. The usual scholar's cap covers his grey hair. The blue-grey eyes are glancing down at his writing. Studies for the marvellously painted hands are among the Louvre drawings. The very Self of the man—the lean, strong, *thinking* countenance,—the elusive smile, shrewd, ironical, yet kindly, stealing out on his lips,—is alive here by some necromancy of art.

The portrait now in the Basel Museum, in oils on paper, afterwards fastened to the panel, is in all likelihood that third portrait which Erasmus told Pirkheimer the painter himself had taken to France. So that Holbein must have painted it for, and carried it to, Bonifacius Amerbach, who was then, in 1524, finishing a renewed course of study at Avignon. Probably it was during this visit to France, too, that he made the spirited sketches of monuments at Bourges. In that case it would seem that he struck across by way of Dijon to the Cathedral City, in connection with some matter not now to be discovered, and from there took the great highway to Avignon by way of Lyons; carrying with him the gift of his sketches from the monuments of Duke Jehan of Berri and his wife.

These were treasured in Amerbach's collection.

Whatever the reason that sent him abroad on this journey,—whether unhappiness at home or the troubled state of public affairs during the Peasants' War of 1524 and 1525,—or whether he simply had business in France which delayed him there for a year or two—at all events, all records fail as to his wanderings or work in this long interval. And many circumstances go to show that it was at this time that he entered upon the immortal work which was published at Lyons, by the Trechsel Brothers, many years later ;—those “ Images of Death ” which have borrowed the old name in popular parlance, and are generally called Holbein's “ Dance ” of Death.

Just why the Trechsels did not issue the publication until 1538 it is impossible to say. As one of the largest Catholic publishing-houses of France, they would be governed by circumstances entirely outside of Holbein's history or control. But more than one circumstance presses the conclusion that the designs were made between 1523 and 1526. And there is a certain amount of evidence for the belief that they may have been first struck off in Germany, possibly by some one of the multi-

farious connections of the Trechsels, as early as 1527. But this is a large subject, not to be dealt with as an aside.

All the world knows these wonderful designs ; their beauty of line, power of expression, and sparkling fancy. Among them all there are only two where Death is a figure of violence ; and but one,—the knight, transfixed by one fell, malignant stroke from behind --where Death exhibits positive ferocity. In both of these,—the Count, beaten down by his own great coat-of-arms, is the other,—it is easy to read a reflection of the actualities of the Peasants' War then raging.

For the rest, the grim skeleton wears no unkind smile ; though that he is Death makes it look a ghastly-enough pleasantry. But toward the poor and the aged he is better than merry ; he is kind. His fleshless hand is raised in benediction over the aged woman ; and the bent patriarch leans on his arm, listening to Death's attendant playing the sweet old melodies of Long-Ago as he stands on the verge of the great Silence.

But where a selection must be made, there are two drawings with their own special claim to consideration. These are the Ploughman and the Priest (Plates 14 and 15). The



former has been cited by Ruskin as an example of a perfect design for wood-engraving ; but even higher than its art, to my thinking, is its feeling. To the labourer of this sort,—poor, patient, toilworn,—Holbein's heart is very gentle. And so is Death—who muffles up his harsh features and speeds the heavy plough with a step like that of Hope. And at the end of the long, last uphill furrow, see how the setting sun shines on " God's Acre ! "

The second selection, the Priest, is its own proof, if any were needed, of how sharply Holbein distinguished cloth from cloth. In it, nearly a decade after he had pointed Erasmus's satire on the unworthy prelate or the unclean friar, may plainly be read that reverence for the true priest which Holbein shared with all his best friends. In the quaint, quiet street this solemn procession is too familiar a sight to draw any spectator from the hearth where the fire of the Living is blazing so cheerily. The good Father, very lovingly drawn, casts his kind glance around as he passes on his Office with the veiled Pyx carried reverently. Before him goes Death, his Server, hastening the last mercy with eager steps. Under his arm is the tiny glass that has measured the whole of a mortality ; the sands have lost their



THE PLOUGHMAN  
*"Images of Death"*  
 Woodcut series



THE PRIEST  
*"Images of Death"*  
 Woodcut series



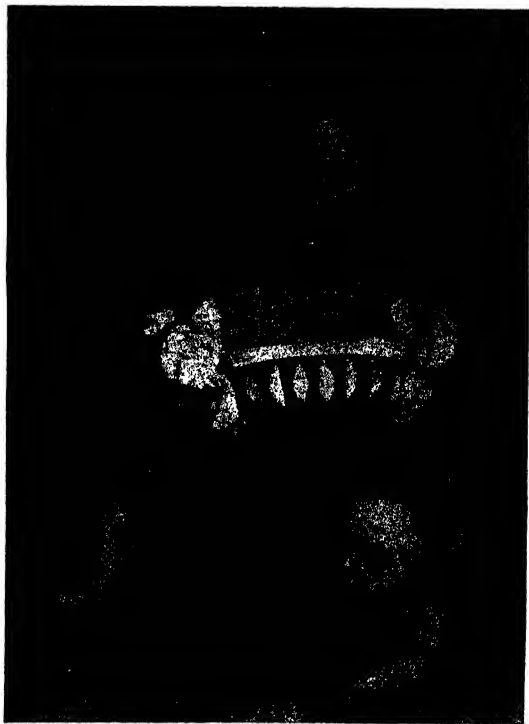
moving charm, and all their dazzle makes but a little shadow now. In his hand is the bell that sounds Take heed, Take heed, to the careless; and Pardon, Peace, to dying ears that strain to hear it. But largest of all his symbols is the lamp in his right hand; his own lamp, the lamp that dissipates Earth's last shadows—the Light of Death.

Holbein must have had his own solemn memories of the Last Office as he drew this picture of the good parish priest. For it was just about this time that the Viaticum must have been administered to his father. In 1526 the then Burgomaster of Basel wrote to the monastery at Issenheim, where Hans Holbein the Elder had left his painting implements behind him years before, in which he recalls to the Fathers how vainly and how often "our citizen," Hans the Younger, had applied to get these costly materials restored to their owner during his life; or to himself as his father's heir afterwards. This application was no more successful than Holbein's own, apparently; and the painter was told to seek his father's gold and pigments among the peasants who had pillaged the monastery.

By 1526 Holbein was back in Basel; but two works of this year would go to show that he

was little less separated from his wife in Basel than when away. The first of these, about one-third life-size, is a portrait of a woman with a child beside her who grasps an arrow to suggest the Goddess of Love attended by a wingless Cupid (Plate 16). The little red-haired child does not do much to realise the ideal ; but the woman, though not an ideal Venus, might nevertheless well pose as a man's goddess. A "fair" woman in more senses than her colouring. Her dark-red velvet dress slashed with white ; wide sleeves of dusky gold-coloured silk ; her close-fitting black head-dress embroidered with gold ; the soft seduction of her look ; the welcoming gesture of that pretty palm flung outward as if to embrace ; these are all in keeping.

This was a lady whose past career might have warned a lover that whatever she might prove as a goddess, she could play but a fallen angel's part. The annals of Basel knew her only too well. This was Dorothea, the daughter of a knight of good old lineage,— Hans von Offenburg. But the knight died while she was quite young, and her mother, better famed for looks than conduct, married the girl to a debauched young aristocrat,— Joachim von Sultz. His own record is hardly



DOROTHEA OFFENBURG AS THE GODDESS OF LOVE

*Oils. Basel Museum*



less shameless than Dorothea's soon became,—though the latter is chiefly in archives of the “unspeakable” sort. At the time when this picture was painted she must have been about two-and-twenty.

Unhappy Holbein, indeed! The temper of Xantippe herself, if she be but the decent mother of one's children, might work less havoc with a life than this embroidered cestus. But “the German Apelles” was no Greek voluptuary, ambitious in heathen vices, such as that other Apelles whose painting of Venus was said to be his masterpiece. And when Holbein inscribed his second portrait of Dorothea with the words *LAÏS CORINTHIACA*, the midsummer madness must have been already a matter of scorn and wonder to himself. His whole life and the works of his life are the negation of the groves of Corinth.

The paint was not long dry on the Goddess of Love—at any rate, her dress was not worn out—before he had seen her in her true colours; “the daughter of the horse-leech, crying Give, Give.”

And so he painted her in 1526 (Plate 17); to scourge himself, surely, since she was too notoriously infamous to be affected by it. As if in stern scorn of every beauty, every allure,



he set himself to record them in detail : something in the spirit with which Macaulay set himself, " by the blessing of God," to do " full justice " to the poems of Montgomery. Laïs is far more beautiful, and far more beautifully painted, than Venus. No emotion has hurried the painter's hand or confused his eye this time. In vain she wears such sadness in her eyes, such pensive dignity of attitude, such a wistful smile on her lips. He knows them, now, for false lights on the wrecker's coast. No faltering ; no turning back. He can even fit a new head-dress on the lovely hair, and add the puffed sleeves below the short ones. He is a painter now ; not a lover. And lest there should be one doubt as to his purpose, he flings a heap of gold where " Cupid's " little hand would now seem desecrated, and inscribes beneath it the name that fits her beauty and his contempt. The plague was raging in Basel all through that spring and summer, but I doubt if Holbein shuddered at its contact as at the loveliness he painted. The brand he placed upon it is proof of that—Laïs Corinthiaca, the infamous mistress of the Greek Apelles.

But in 1526 men sat among the ashes of far goodlier palaces and larger interests than



DOROTHEA OFFENBURG AS LAÏS CORINTHIACA

*Oil. Basel Museum*



personal ones. The party in power was not friendlier to Art than to the Church of Rome. In January the Painters' Guild had presented a petition to the Council,—humbly praying that its members, “who had wives and children depending on their work,” might be allowed to pursue it in Basel! And so hard was Holbein himself hit by the fanatical excitement of the time that the Council's account-books show the paltry wage he was glad to earn for painting a few shields on some official building “in the borough of Waldenburg.”

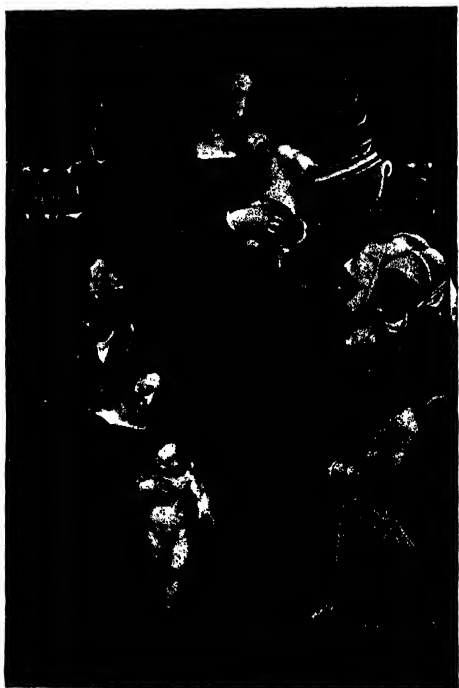
Small wonder that an artist such as Holbein should feel his heart grow sick within him, and should turn his thoughts with increasing determination to some fresh field. Even without the bitterness that now must have edged the tongue of a wronged wife, or the bitterer taste of Dead Sea fruit in his own mouth,—he must have been driven to try his luck elsewhere. And of all the invitations urged upon him, the chances which Erasmus's introductions could give him in England would probably offer the greatest promise.

But before he set out with these letters, in the late summer of 1526, he executed yet one more great commission for his old friend, Jacob Meyer zum Hasen, now leader of the Catholic

party in opposition. This was the work known now to all the civilised world as "The Meyer Madonna." For centuries the beautiful picture which bears this name in the Dresden Gallery has been cited by every expert authority and critic as this work. But since the mysterious appearance of the Darmstadt painting, which suddenly turned up in a Paris art collector's possession, from no one knows where in 1822, the tide of belief has slowly receded from the Dresden painting. Until now there are only a few judges who do not hold—especially since the public comparison of the two works at Dresden in 1871—that the Dresden picture is "a copy by an inferior hand."

Unquestionably the painting now in the Schloss at Darmstadt is the earlier version. And unquestionably, too, the changes introduced in the Dresden copy,—the elevated architecture, slenderer figures, and less happy Child,—are so great as to lend weight to the arguments of those who still claim that no copyist would ever have made them. But, as has been said, the contention that the Dresden work is a replica by Holbein of the older Darmstadt altar-piece, is now maintained by only a very small minority of judges. The painting of the Darmstadt work is admitted by all to be more uniformly





THE MEYER-MADONNA  
*Oil. Grand Ducal Collection, Darmstadt*





PLATE 19



THE MEYER-MADONNA

*[Later Version. Held by many to be a copy]*

*Oils. Dresden Gallery*

admirable, more completely carried out; the details more finished (except in the case of the Virgin), and the colours richer and more harmonious. Yet both works should be studied to appreciate fully their claims and differences (Plates 18 and 19).

In the Darmstadt work the Virgin's dress is wholly different in tone from her robe at Dresden; otherwise the colouring aims to be the same in each. Here, in the original altar-piece, it is a greenish-blue. The lower sleeves are golden, a line of white at the wrist, and a filmier one within the bodice. Her girdle is a rich red; her mantle a greenish-grey. Over this latter her fair hair streams like softest sunshine. Above her noble, pity-full face sits her crown of fine gold and pearls.

The woman kneeling nearest to the Madonna is commonly believed to be Meyer's first wife, who had died in 1511, the mother of one child—a daughter—by a previous husband. Between this stepdaughter and Meyer there was considerable litigation over her property. The younger woman, whose chin-cloth is dropped in the painting though worn like the others in the drawing for her portrait, is Meyer's second wife, Dorothea Kannegiesser, whom he married about 1512, and with whom he was painted by

Holbein in 1516. The sombre garments of both women are echoed by the black of Meyer's hair and coat, the latter lined with light-brown fur. Meyer's face, in its manly intensity of devotional feeling, is a wonderful piece of psychology in the Darmstadt picture.

In the drawing for the young girl, Anna Meyer, who kneels beside her mother with a red rosary in her hands, she has her golden-brown hair hanging loose down her back, as befits a girl of thirteen. But in the painting it is coiled in glossy braids beneath some ceremonial head-dress; this is richly embroidered with pearls, with red silk tassel and a wreath of red and white flowers above it. This head-dress is painted with much more beautiful precision in the older work, and the expression of the girl's face is much more deeply devout; her hands, too, are decidedly superior to those of the Dresden work.

This is true also of the carpet, patterned in red and green, with touches of white and black, on a ground of deep yellow. The Dresden carpet is conspicuously inferior in finish and colour to that of Darmstadt, so much so that Waagen and others, who believe the former a replica, think a pupil or assistant may have been responsible for this and other

details, which for some reason Holbein himself was unable to finish.

The elder boy, with the tumbled brown hair, dressed in a light-brown coat trimmed with red-brown velvet, and hose of cinnabar-red, with decorations of gold clasps and tags on fine blue cords, has a yellowish-green portemonnaie, with tassels of dull blue hanging from his girdle. All the carnations are superb, and in the Darmstadt picture the infant Christ wears a sweet and happy smile. In that of Dresden He looks sad and ill; a fact which has given rise to the theory Ruskin adopted—that the Virgin had put down the divine Child and taken up Meyer's ailing one. But the absence of wonder on the faces of Meyer's family, and, indeed, the familiar affection of the elder boy, would of itself negative this theory. I have my own ideas as to this point, but it would serve no useful purpose to go into them in this place. Of these two sons of Meyer there is no other record. Anna alone survived her mother, who married again after Meyer's death. Anna's daughter married Burgomaster Remigius Fäsch, or Fesch, whose grandson—Remigius Fäsch, counsellor-at-law—was the well-known art collector whose collection and manuscript are also in the Basel Museum,

where there is an oil-copy of the Dresden Meyer-Madonna.

Even the cool eye of Walpole was warmed by this great work of 1526, as he saw it in the Dresden painting then hanging in the Palazzo Delfino at Venice. "For the colouring," he exclaims, "it is beautiful beyond description ; and the carnations have that enamelled bloom so peculiar to Holbein, who touched his works till not a touch remained discernible." Twenty years earlier Edward Wright had written of Meyer's youngest boy—"The little naked boy could hardly have been outdone, if I may dare to say such a word, by Raphael himself." And in our own day that fine and measured critic, Mrs. Jameson, has spoken for generation upon generation who have thought the same thought before the Meyer-Madonna of Dresden, when she says of it : "In purity, dignity, humility and intellectual grace this exquisite Madonna has never been surpassed ; not even by Raphael. The face, once seen, haunts the memory."

When Wright and Walpole saw this Dresden work at Venice, it was supposed to be "the family of Sir Thomas More"—*Meier* having slipped into "More" in the course of centuries, which had retained only the vivid impression

of Holbein's association with the latter, and knew that the painter had drawn him in the midst of his family. That living association was now, late in the summer of this year, about to begin.

## CHAPTER III

### CHANCES AND CHANGES

1526-1530

First visit to England—Sir Thomas More ; his home and portraits—The Windsor drawings—Bishop Fisher—Archbishop Warham—Bishop Stokesley—Sir Henry Guildford and his portrait—Nicholas Kratzer—Sir Bryan Tuke—Holbein's return to Basel—Portrait-group of his wife and two eldest children ; two versions—Holbein's children, and families claiming descent from him—Iconoclastic fury—Ruined arts—Death of Meyer zum Hasen—Another Meyer commissions the last paintings for Basel—Return to England—Description of the Steelyard—Portraits of its members—George Gysze—Basel Council summons Holbein home—"The Ambassadors" at the National Gallery ; accepted identification—Coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn—Lost paintings for the Guildhall of the Steelyard ; the Triumphs of Riches and Poverty—The great Morett portrait ; identifications—Holbein's industry and fertility—Designs for metal-work and other drawings—Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

**T**WO years earlier Erasmus had evidently thought that London was the true stage for such a genius as Holbein's, and More had

written that he would gladly do all he could to further the painter's success if he should decide to visit England. More himself called Holbein "a marvellous artist" for his portrait of Erasmus, and could not but be delighted with the beautiful little woodcut which opened Froben's edition of his own *Utopia*.

This illustration represents More and his only son seated with Ægidius, or Peter Gillis, in the latter's own garden at Antwerp, listening to the tale of *Utopia* from the ancient comrade of Amerigo Vespucci. And very likely Holbein himself sat in this garden, in the late summer of 1526, when he was passing through Antwerp to England. He had a letter of introduction from Erasmus to Ægidius, as also to the host who was expecting him in England — Sir Thomas More.

Van Mander says that long before this the Earl of Arundel, when pausing at Basel, had been so much pleased with Holbein's works in that city that he had urged the painter to forsake it for London. But it would pretty surely have been the promise of More's influence which actually induced him to try his fortune so far afield. And by the autumn of 1526 he was one of that happy company which the genial soul of More drew around him in his



new home in "Chelsea Village," where Beaufort Row now, has its north end. Here the master's love of every art, and aptitude in affairs, filled his hospitable mansion with wit and music and joyous strenuousness. Here he was the idol of his family, as well as the King's friend. Henry himself must surely have shuddered could he have pictured that face, over which thought and humour were ever chasing one another like sun and shadow on the lawn, black above London Bridge and flung at last from it into the Thames only a few years hence. Now it turned to his own all life and loyalty, as he laid his arm around More's shoulders while they wandered between the garden beds of Chelsea.

Early in 1527, probably, Holbein had finished the fine portrait of his host, which is now in Mr. Huth's collection. The study for this oil painting is among the Windsor drawings (Plate 20), as also one for the large family picture now lost, if indeed it was ever completed by Holbein; a matter of some doubt, notwithstanding Van Mander's account of it in the possession of the art-collector Van Loo. An outline sketch of it, or for it, he certainly made. And that precious pen-and-ink outline,—with the name of each written above or



SIR THOMAS MORE  
*Chalks. Windsor Castle*



below the figure in More's hand, and notes as to alterations to be made in the final composition in Holbein's hand,—is now in the Basel Museum; having come into Amerbach's possession as the heir of Erasmus.

In Mr. Huth's oil portrait More is wearing a dark-green coat trimmed with fur, and showing the purple sleeves of his doublet beneath. His eyes are grey-blue. He never wore a beard, made the fashion by Henry VIII. at the same time that the head was "polled,"—a singularly ugly combination,—until he was in the Tower and grew that beard which he smilingly swept away from the path of the executioner's axe. "It," he said with astonishing self-possession, could be "accused of no treason." In 1527, however, no shadow of tragedy seemed possible unless the suspicion of it slept in More's own heart when he said to his son-in-law, in answer to some flattering congratulation on the King's favour, "Son Roper, if my head could win him a castle in France, my head should fall."

But for these superb drawings in the Royal Collection at Windsor, we should know nothing at all of many a portrait Holbein painted—all among the immediate friends of More and Erasmus on this first visit to England; nor, for

that matter, of many a portrait painted in later years. And how little these can be trusted to tell the whole tale of achievement is shown by the fact that they include no studies for a number of oil paintings that are still in existence.

Of the drawings which represent a lost painting, there is a noble one of Bishop Fisher, whose execution preceded More's by only a few weeks. A literally venerable head it was (Plate 21), to be the shuttlecock of papal defiance and royal determination not to be defied with impunity. For assuredly if the life of the Bishop of Rochester hung in the balance, as it did, in May, 1535, it was Paul III.'s mad effrontery in making him a Cardinal while he was actually in the Tower under his sovereign's displeasure which heated the King's anger to white-hot brutality. "Let the Pope send him a hat," he thundered, "but I will so provide that he shall wear it on his shoulders, for head he shall have none to set it on!" And on the 17th of that June he made good the savage oath. Yet the painter, after all, has been more potent than the King. For here lives Fisher. Bishop or Cardinal this is the man, as More loved him.

A striking and richly painted oil portrait of Erasmus's "Mecænas," Archbishop Warham,



JOHN FISHER, BISHOP OF ROCHESTER  
*Chalks. Windsor Castle*



is in the Louvre; of which there are a number of copies, as well as a replica, at Lambeth Palace. The latter was exhibited at Manchester in 1857. The study for these portraits is among the Windsor drawings. The painting in the Louvre has more vividness in the carnations, and the impasto is thicker than at Lambeth; otherwise the two are identical. But for myself I find a more seizing quality in the chalk drawing than in either. There is something in its sunken fading eyes that speaks of the majesty of office as well as its burdens.

Holbein painted a prelate of a very different sort in the oil portrait of John Stokesley, Bishop of London, which is preserved at Windsor Castle. And yet he dared to paint the Truth—now as always. The painting is a masterpiece of modelling and soft transparency of light and shade. But the truculent, lowering countenance leaves small doubt that the sitter was a gentleman pre-eminently “gey ill to live wi’.”

There is another oil painting at Windsor which has not escaped the injuries of time, but is none the less a splendid survival of 1527. This is the portrait of Sir Henry Guildford, Master of the Horse to Henry VIII., and holder of many another office of trust (Plate 22).



It has sometimes been thought that the yellow tone of the complexion was due to over-painting, but the chalk drawing shows that it was a personal peculiarity.

Sir Henry, a warm friend to both More and Erasmus, was forty-nine when he sat for this portrait. Under his black fir-trimmed surcoat he wears a doublet of gold brocade. In his hand is the wand of office as Chamberlain, and he is decorated with the collar and badge of the Garter.

He was always a great favourite with the King from the time when the latter came to the throne and young Guildford, then twenty, was one of the gayest, bravest, most loyal spirits about it. Always as ready for a real battle as a mimic one ; as clever at writing plays for the King's amusement as at acting in them ; as good in a revel as at a piece of diplomacy ; it is not much wonder that his knighthood in 1512 should but have been the prelude to a long series of promotions.

The affection of master and man, too, was singularly sincere for a court. Sir Henry loyally supported the King's demand for a divorce, but he was by no means ready to support a second marriage without the papal preliminary. Hence he was not a persona



SIR HENRY GUILDFORD  
*Oils. Windsor Castle*



grata to Anne Boleyn. Nor would he stoop to curry favour at the expense of an honest conviction. When Anne warned him that he was likely to lose his office as soon as she became Queen, he promptly replied that he would spare her all concern about that, and went straight to the King to resign the office of Controller. The latter showed the depth of his affection by urging Sir Henry, twice, to reconsider his determination. But he wisely preferred to quit his apartments under the King's roof,—without, however, breaking the bond of mutual attachment. Five years after this picture was painted he died; in May, 1532. Holbein also painted Lady Guildford's portrait; an oil painting in Mr. Frewer's collection. And Sir Henry selected him as one of the chief artists commissioned to decorate the interior of the Banqueting Hall specially erected for the celebration of the French Alliance in 1527. By all of which it would seem that in securing a new patron the painter had once more made a friend.

Erasmus had asked Ægidius to assist Holbein's success in any way he could. And it was probably owing to a letter from the Antwerp scholar that a friendship of many years sprang up between the painter and Nicholas Kratzer of Munich, then Astronomer-Royal at the Court

of Henry VIII. It began with what was once a fine portrait. But the oil painting, now in the Louvre (Plate 23), has suffered such severe injuries as to be but a poor ghost of what it was originally. Only the composition, and the fidelity with which all his friend's scientific instruments are drawn attest Holbein. He never adds a detail for merely pictorial purposes; and never shuffles one that concerns the personality of a sitter. No biographer with his pen sets every straw to show the winds of character and circumstance more deliberately than does this historian with his brush. Something of Kratzer's shrewd wit,—for he was a “character”—can still be read in his half-destroyed picture. Years later we shall see the intimate friend of both him and his painter writing of the astronomer as a man “brim-full” of humour and fancy. And once, we may be sure, it sparkled in the eyes of Kratzer's portrait as brilliantly as in his own.

In the Munich Gallery there is another portrait in oils which has undergone, if possible, still more atrocious treatment than Kratzer's; yet, like it, still keeps enough of its original charm to rivet attention in any company. This latter is one of the most striking of the half-dozen portraits of Sir Bryan Tuke, which



NICHOLAS KRATZER

*Oils. The Louvre*



all claim, with more or less of probability, to be paintings by Holbein. And certainly in the years when Sir Bryan was Treasurer of the King's Household it would be natural that the painter, whose salary he regularly disbursed, should gladly oblige him to his utmost.

But the Munich portrait also shows a far deeper bond of interests than one of money. The undercurrent of their natures ran in a groove of more than common sympathy ; and to an analyst, such as Holbein was, the reflections behind these inscrutable eyes were full of unusual attraction.

Myself, I feel convinced, for more than one reason, that it is a work of some years later. But as a consensus of authorities places it during this visit, the picture is noticed here. It gains rather than loses by reproduction ;--since the painting now shows a strange disagreeable colour most unlike the carnations of Holbein. But the composition is unmistakable (Plate 24). Between the sitter and the green-curtained background stands perhaps the ghastliest of all Holbein's skeletons,—one hand on his scythe, the other grimly pointing at the nearly-spent sands of the hour-glass. Below the latter is a tablet on which, in Latin, are the words of Job : “ My short life, does it not



come to an end soon?" and the signature without the date. Sir Bryan wears a fur-trimmed doublet with gold buttons; the gold-patterned sleeves revealed by the black silk gown, also trimmed with fur. On a massive gold chain he wears a cross of great richness, enamelled with the pierced Hands and Feet. Fine lawn is at throat and wrists; and in one hand he holds his gloves.

\* \* \* \* \*

Before the researches of Eduard His, it used to be sometimes said that Holbein had virtually deserted his family when he left Basel in 1526. We know now, however, that whatever were the moral wrongs which he suffered or committed, he never forsook the duty of providing for his wife and children in no ungenerous proportion to his means.

The records show that the fruit of his two years' industry was used to acquire a comfortable home which remained the property of his wife. And the inventory of its contents at Elsbeth's death, some six years after Holbein's death, proves that this home was to the full as well furnished and comfortable as was usual with people of similar condition.

In the summer of 1528 the painter bade fare-



SIR BRYAN TUKE  
*Oil. Munch Gallery*



well for ever to Sir Thomas More's gracious Chelsea home. He took with him the pen-and-ink sketch for a large picture of More in the midst of his family, which has been already referred to. This was for Erasmus, who had temporarily abandoned Basel,—now so utterly unlike the Basel of former years,—and had sought the more sympathetic atmosphere of Freiburg. Bonifacius Amerbach, from the same causes, was here with Erasmus for some time. So that something like the old Froben days must have seemed still about them as the three friends sat together and talked of all that had come and gone.

But by the latter part of August Holbein was back in that now sadly-altered Basel whence his best friends were reft by trouble or death. And on the 29th of August, 1528, he bought the house next to Froben's *Buchhaus*, the deed attesting that he did so in person, in company with Elsbeth. The price, 300 guldens or florins, was by no means the small one it now seems, nor could the painter pay the whole sum at once. He paid down one-third, and secured the rest by a mortgage. The site of this house is now occupied by 22 St. Johann Vorstadt. Three years later, March 28th, 1531, Holbein bought out a disagreeable neighbour;

and thus added to his two-storied house overlooking the Rhine the little one-storied cottage which cost him only seventy guldens. The factory at No. 20 now partially covers this latter site. Fifty years ago both of the original houses were still standing; quaint, crumbling, affecting monuments of days when Holbein's voice and Holbein's step rang through their rooms, when Frau Elsbeth swept and garnished them; and when four children added their links to the chain of a marriage which Holbein was now manfully trying to make the best of.

It must have been in the year after the purchase of the larger house that he painted the group of his wife and the two children she had then borne him. This life-size group, done in oils on paper, is now in the Basel Museum (Plate 25). The stoical sincerity with which they are represented, and the hard outline produced by cutting out the work to mount it on its wood panel, makes a somewhat repellent impression at the first glance. And this is in no way dispersed by studying Elsbeth's traits. But the painting itself is a tour-de-force. By sheer Quality Holbein has invested these portraits,—a middle-aged, coarse-figured, unamiable-looking woman, a very commonplace infant, and a bright-faced boy,—with the pres-



ELSBETH, HOLBEIN'S WIFE, WITH THEIR TWO ELDEST CHILDREN  
*Oil. Basel Museum*



tige inseparable from an achievement of a high order.

Clearly Elsbeth Holbein was not one to give up the costume of her youth simply because she would have been well advised to do so; and the cut and fashion of her dress remains almost identical with the drawing in the Louvre. Her lustreless light-brown hair is covered with a gauzy veil and a reddish-brown cap. Her brown stuff upper garment, trimmed with thin fur, shows a dark-green dress beneath it. The baby wears a gown of undyed woollen material, and the boy a jacket of dark bluish green.

Out of such unpromising materials has the painter made a picture that would challenge attention among any. If we knew nothing as to the identity of this woman, sitting oblivious of the children at her knee, wrapped in her own dark thoughts, we should certainly want to know something of her story and of the story of the little fellow whose eyes are breathlessly intent upon some purer, sweeter vision. There is at Cologne, in a private collection, a deeply interesting duplicate of this work; also on paper afterwards mounted on wood, but not cut out. Unfortunately this latter has suffered such irremediable injuries that it is quite impossible now to pronounce upon its claim to be



either the earlier example or a replica ; but good judges have believed it to be by Holbein. Its chief interest, however, from a biographical point of view, may be said to lie in the sixteenth-century writing pasted on at the top. Literally translated, this runs—

“ Love towards God consists in Charity.  
Who hath this love can feel no hate.”<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to see on what grounds Woltmann, who was inclined to accept the picture as genuine, should hold the inscription to have been added by someone desirous of increasing the value of the work by representing it to be an allegorical picture of Charity. There was never a time when the allegory, if accepted, could have carried the same value as the portraits. And surely the second line is utterly inconsistent with the theory. Original or not, it has a very startling likeness to a plea which Holbein himself must have urged more than once, to soften a bitterness his own errors could not have tended to cure.

When the Basel painting was cut out to be mounted, the last numeral was lost ; so that it now stands dated 152-. But all the other facts

<sup>1</sup> “ *Die Liebe zu Gott Heist charite.  
Wer Liebe hat der Tragt kein Hass.*”

put it beyond question that the picture could not have been done before 1529. The baby of 1522 was now the boy of seven, and his successor would seem to have been born during the first months of its father's visit to England, and to be now some eighteen months old.

It may be as well to say here, once for all, as much as need be said of Holbein's family. As already stated, his wife survived him by six years, dying at Basel in 1549. By her first marriage she had one son, Franz Schmidt—who seems to have been a worthy and successful man of trade. She was the mother of four children by her marriage with Holbein;—Philip, born 1522; Katharina, 1527; Jacob, about 1530; and Künegoldt, about 1532.

Some years before the painter's death he took Philip Holbein to Paris, and there apprenticed him to the eminent goldsmith, Jerome David, with whom he remained until a couple of years after Holbein's death. Later, he somehow drifted to Lisbon, where he followed his trade until he settled in the old home of his grandfather and great-grandfather, Augsburg. In 1611 his son, Philip Holbein, junior, then "Imperial Court Jeweller" at Augsburg, petitioned the Emperor Matthias for letters patent to "confirm" his right to certain noble arms. The claims put forward

in this document are utterly at variance with the received belief in Holbein's humble Augsburg origin. Yet the most expert investigators who have carefully studied this subject agree in thinking that this grandson based the genealogical tree on mythical foundations, and therefore planted it remote from Augsburg itself. But be this as it may—and it seems hard to reconcile such discrepancies within a century of the time when both Hans Holbein the Elder and his son were well-known citizens of Augsburg,—the application was successful. Mechel says that this Philip, who claims descent from the renowned “painter of Basel,” lived in Vienna during his later years; and that a descendant of his again got their patent “confirmed” in 1756, with the right to carry the surname of *Holbeinsberg*; also that this latter descendant was made a Knight of the Empire in 1787, as the noble *von Holbeinsberg*. So much for the eldest branch, that of Philip Holbein.

The younger boy, Jacob, was a goldsmith in London after Holbein's death. The evidence seems to show that he was never here previous to that event,—which of itself may have first occasioned his coming, though hardly at the time, as Jacob was not more than thirteen at

his father's death. A document in existence proves that he also died in London, about 1552, and apparently unmarried ; at which time his elder brother, Philip, was still in Lisbon.

Katharina, the elder daughter, the baby of the Basel painting, seems to have left no descendants. She married a butcher of Basel and died in 1590. And in the same year, very likely from one of the frequent epidemics so fatal to Basel, died Künegoldt, Elsbeth's youngest child. The Merian family of Frankfurt-am-Main claims an hereditary right to the artistic gifts of its famous copper-engraver, Mathew Merian, as descendants of Holbein through this daughter Künegoldt, who, when she died, was the wife of Andreas Syff, a miller, of Basel. According to the greatest authority on this subject, Eduard His, to whose exhaustive researches we owe almost all that is known of Holbein's family, the Merian claims have not, so far, been proved by actual archives ; but he is of opinion that there is considerable circumstantial evidence to support their claim to be lineal descendants of Holbein through the female line.

But in 1529, when the family group was painted, neither Jacob nor Künegoldt were yet born ; and the painter was much more concerned

with the anxieties of a living father than with the shadowy cares of an ancestor.

And dark enough was the outlook in Basel, where the Lutheran agitation had, as Erasmus said, "frozen the arts." Before Holbein came back from England many churches had abjured all pictures. The tide of religious antagonism had, as we know, driven both Erasmus and Bonifacius Amerbach for a time to a Catholic stronghold; and had driven their old friend Meyer to do literal battle on behalf of the Church.

Altar paintings were out of the question. And Holbein could but devote himself to designs for the printers and for goldsmiths. Many beautiful compositions for both crafts remain to testify of his matured powers and constant industry. The exquisite designs for dagger-sheaths, in particular, are rightly counted among the treasures of art. But in the summer of 1530 came a commission for the painter's last great work in Basel. This was the long-delayed order for the decoration of that vacant wall in the Council Hall, which adjoined the house *zum Hasen*.

Oddly enough, this commission also came officially through a burgomaster, Jacob Meyer. But the Meyer of 1530, Meyer "of-the-

Stag" (*zum Hirten*), had neither blood nor sentiments in common with the Meyer under whom Holbein had done his first work in the Rathaus. Each headed a party at deadly issue. For the past year Meyer-of-the-Hare had vainly tried to turn back the clock or to stay the iconoclastic fury of the hour. Religious fanaticism had wrecked him as well as every beautiful piece of art on which it could lay its hands. And now at last it mattered nothing any more so far as he was concerned. The dreadful harvests that had brought virtual famine, the earthquake shocks which had unsettled many a mental as well as material foundation, the flooding devastations of the Birsig, the rage of Canton against Canton, the Civil War ready to begin, Pope or Luther come by his own,—it was all one at last to Meyer zum Hasen, who died just as his protégé of earlier years was commissioned to paint the blank wall.

But something of his spirit, something of what he himself had been preaching to Basel in warning and threat for years, seems to have passed on into the pictures Holbein set before the Council. The paintings, alas! are no more. But a fragment or two and the drawings for them show how truly grand the two works were

which Holbein had probably already intended should be his swan-song as Holbein *Basilien-sis*. He chose for his subjects Rehoboam's answer to the suffering Israelites: "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins; my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions"; and Samuel prophesying to Saul how dearly he shall learn that "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as an iniquity and idolatry."

Both subjects are treated in the Great manner. Rehoboam, leaning forward from his throned seat with flashing eyes, and his little finger seeming actually to quiver in the air, is wonderfully conceived. But the meeting of Samuel and Saul (Plate 26) most splendidly demonstrates how far Holbein towered above mere portraiture when he had the opportunity. To picture this drawing in all the beauty of colour is to realise what we have lost, and what his just fame has lost, with the utter destruction of such works.

Not the greatest of the Italians could have improved upon the distribution and balance of this composition. The blazing background, the sense of a densely crowded host beyond what the eye can grasp, of captives and captors



*Behold to obey is better than sacrifice*

SAMUEL DENOUNCING SAUL

*Washed Drawing. Basel Museum*





—all the stupendous crackle and roar and shout and sudden strained silence of Saul's immediate followers—is amply matched by those two typical protagonists, just then repeating the old drama with varying fortunes on the world's new stage. The Secular Arm has been short in the service of God, as interpreted by his Vicar; it has thought, in Saul's person, to win the cause, yet spare its enemies. Vain is it for him to run with humility, to tell what he has won and what overcome and done. He has not destroyed All—root and branch. For reasons of personal policy, he has given quarter. And the Priest, for God, will have none of his well-meaning excuses, of his good intentions, his policy, his burnt offerings of half-way measures;—"Behold to obey is better than sacrifice," begins his fierce anathema, "and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Doubtless the Protestant party read its own meanings into these texts, when once the pictures were painted and paid for with seventy-two good guldens. But two very significant facts form their own commentary. One is that the only employment he received from the Council afterward was to redecorate the old Lällenkönig monstrosity on the bridge!—and the other, that as soon as Holbein got his pay for this disgrace-

ful commission, a pay he was now much too hard pressed to refuse, he quietly slipped away from Basel without taking the Council into his confidence. Judging from his after conduct to his family, he probably left the seventy-two guildens to support his wife and children—now four little ones—until such time as he could send them more from England; and took his way once more, in the late autumn of 1531, with knapsack and paint-brushes for the journey, to a city that might give him few walls to cover, but would certainly not set him to painting the town clock.

\* \* \* \* \*

Things had changed in London also, and gravely, Holbein found, since he had quitted Sir Thomas More's home at Chelsea with the sketch for Erasmus, in the summer of 1528. He had barely settled himself, in the City this time, before the struggle between Henry VIII. and the English Clergy ended in that Convocation when the latter made its formal "Submission." And in the same month that this took place, Sir Henry Guildford died. Then the three great Acts of Parliament, which swept away the crying abuses of "Benefit of Clergy," resurrected the "dead"

lands (so called because perpetually *aliened in mortmain*) by restoring them to the national circulation of the Sovereign-Will, and turned the rich stream of Annates or "First-Fruits" of the bishoprics from the Pope's coffers to the King's,—were passed in this year.

This legislation was followed by the solemn protest and then the death of Archbishop Warham. So that now of that great and close quartet of friends,—Colet, Warham, More, and Erasmus,—there were two on either shore of the last crossing. And More could already see the dark river ahead. His eye marked the consequences of the Acts as keenly as his aged friend Warham had discerned them on his death-bed ; and shortly after the "Submission," More resigned his great office as Chancellor.

These seem matters too high to twist the threads of a poor painter's life. But in reality Holbein's career was shaped, from many a year back, by such events as rarely touch the humble individual directly. All his friends and all his patrons in this country were carried far out of reach by 1532 ; and he must sink or swim, as they in darker waters, according to his own powers. That under such unexpected ill-fortune he did not immediately sink

was due to two things—the greatness of his powers, and the circumstance that a trading-company of Continentals, chiefly German, was seated in London with immense wealth and immense influence at its disposal, and that they were men who knew how to appreciate Holbein at his worth.

The roots of the Steelyard (*Stahlhof*), or “Stilyard,” as it is often called in early dramatists, go far back to the legendary centuries of English history. From before the time of Alfred the Great, traders from Germany had clustered together on the bank of the Thames, close to where Cannon Street Station now stands. Amalgamation with the Hanseatic League, and the necessities and gratitude of more than one king of England—but especially of Edward IV.—had made of the Steelyard a company such as only the East India Company of later centuries may be compared to. With the world’s new geography and new commercial conditions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its methods and its monopoly of the seas were gradually superseded by the great seamen of the Elizabethan era. But in Holbein’s time, though already some of the Hanseatic ships were too overgrown to pass London Bridge and cast anchor

at their own docks just above it, there was scarce a cloud upon the colossal prosperity of the Steelyard.

Its walled and turreted enclosure, able to withstand the fiercest assaults of Wat Tyler's men, stretched from the river northward to Thames Street, and from Allhallows Street on the east to Dowgate Street on the west; and it might well have been described as a German city and port situated in the heart of the City of London. Its massive front in Thames Street, where were its three portcullised and fortified gateways with German inscriptions above and the Imperial Double-Eagle high over all, was one of the sights of London. And the Steelyard Tavern was a famous resort. When Holbein knew it well the greatest prelates and nobles and all the Court crowd,—which stretched its gardens and great houses from the stream of the Fleet, just west of the City wall, to Westminster Abbey,—used to flock to this Thames Street corner of the Steelyard to drink Rhenish wine and eat smoked reindeer-tongue and caviar.

Within the gates stood the big Guildhall, which answered both for its councils and its noted banquets. The high carved mantelpieces and wainscotting served admirably to display the

glittering plate and strange souvenirs of every known land and sea. On the walls which Holbein's works were so to enrich hung portraits of eminent members of the Guild. The Hall was flanked by the huge stone kitchen and by a strong-tower for the safeguarding of special valuables. In the open space between the Hall and the west wall of the enclosure was the garden, where trees and flowers and a greenery of vines had been planted in exact imitation of the gardens of the Fatherland. And here sat Holbein among the Associates, many a time, over their good cheer,—as in the old Basel gardens of the Blume or the Stork in other years, and heard only the German tongue or the songs of home around him.

Away down to the docks ran the lanes of warehouses; shops and booths where every German trader or craftsman in London had his place; and where the merchandise of the world—the greater part of it destined for Lübeck as a centre of European distribution—might be sampled. Here were choicest specimens of the then costly spices of Cathay, or the famous falcons of Norway and Livonia, for which English sportsmen were willing to pay fabulous prices.

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As in other guilds, the government of this cosmopolitan beehive was that of a despotic democracy. All the inmates of the precincts were subjected to a rule little short of monastic in its strict discipline. The penalties for any infringement, for drunkenness or dicing or even for an abusive epithet, were very severe. The civic duties of the corporation, too, were sharply defined. In case of war every member had his appointed post in the defence of London. Every "master" had to keep the prescribed accoutrements and arms ready for immediate use, and the repairs and maintenance of the Bishop's Gate were at the sole cost of the Steelyard.

No chapel was erected within its enclosure, the Guild preferring to be incorporated with the adjoining parish of Allhallows. Whether or not there is any truth at the bottom of the ancient tradition that this church had been originally founded by Germans, the Guild maintained its own altar in it in Holbein's time, where Masses were said on its own special days and festivals. So far are the facts from the common supposition that the doctrines of Luther would find natural favour in such a community, that the latter only gradually came into the "Church of England" by the same slow processes which



transformed the whole parish around it. And when More, who was anything but *Utopian* himself in the practice of tolerating "heresy" during his chancellorship, headed a domiciliary visit in search of Lutheran writings, he could find nothing but orthodox German Prayer-books and the Scriptures, whose use among laymen he always strenuously advocated; while every member of the community was able to make honest and hearty oath at St. Paul's Cross that no heretic or heretical doctrine would be tolerated amongst them.

Here, then, in this staunch citadel of his own faith, Holbein naturally found a new circle of friends among whom it must have been strangely easy to fancy himself back in the Fischmarkt of his young years, with Froben and Erasmus and Amerbach and Meyer zum Hasen.

The curtain rings up on his work for the Steelyard,—work which covered many years and more fine paintings than could even be enumerated here — with a superlative exhibition of all his powers. The oil portrait of Georg Gyze, or George Gisze, as it is often written, now in the Berlin Gallery (Plate 27), inscribed 1532, has called forth the enthusiastic eulogies of every competent judge. By a piece of rare good fortune it is in perfect preservation.



JÖRG (OR GEORGE) GYZÉ  
*Oil. Berlin Museum*



The black of the surcoat alone has lost a little of its first lustre ; all the rest is as though it had left the easel but the other day.

The young merchant is seated among his daily surroundings in the Steelyard. He is in the act of leisurely opening a letter addressed, "To the hand of the honourable Jörg Gyze, my brother, in London, England" (*Dem ersamen herrn Jörg Gyzcn zu Lunden in Engelant meinem broder to henden*). The merchant's motto, "No pleasure without care," is chalked up in Latin on the background, with his signature beneath it. Written on a paper stuck higher up is a Latin verse in praise of the portrait; also the date, and the sitter's age—thirty-four. On the racks and shelves are documents, books, keys, a watch and seals, and a pair of scales. A gold ball is hanging from above with a lovely chasing in blue enamel; a miracle of painting in itself, to say nothing of the exquisite Venetian glass, filled with water and carnation-pinks. This flower has its own meaning, and is introduced in more than one of Holbein's portraits. On the rich oriental tablecloth are writing materials also, with account-books, seal and scissors.

\* Gyze himself is a fair-haired man, wearing a brilliant red silk doublet beneath his black

cloak. And the amazing thing is that amidst this bewildering array of pictures—for every article is such in itself, owing to the perfection of its painting—Gyze is not lost or overridden for a moment. It is unmistakably *his* picture; and he dominates the accessories as much as he did in reality. The man, the whole man, is there; and the things are there around him; that is all. But that the eye recognises this is the demonstration of the painter's own mastery. It is as much Holbein's peculiar secret as are the cool shadows, the luminous glow, the astounding elaboration, all made to express the dignity of one, and but one, theme.

As has been said, the Steelyard portraits are too many to even catalogue here, covering many years. But Gyze's may be taken as their high-water mark. For that matter it could not, in its own way, be surpassed by any portrait. Holbein himself greatly surpassed it in the matter of subtle and noble simplicity, in his two greatest extant pieces of portraiture—the Morett of Dresden and the Duchess of Milan, now in our National Gallery. But in technical powers, and the power of subordinating their very virtuosity to the requirement of a true picture, this was a superlative expression of his matured method.

## CHANCES AND CHANGES 145

In the midst of all his fresh London successes came a summons from Basel, which must have made the painter smile a little grimly. It had slowly dawned on the Council that Holbein—whose renown they well knew was a feather in Basel's cap—was proposing to make a prolonged absence. The result was a decision which the Burgomaster officially conveyed to him. Jacob Meyer zum Hirten wrote to say that Holbein was desired to return immediately to resume the duties of a citizen-artist, and that the Council, anxious to assist him in the support of his family, had resolved to allow him an annuity of thirty guldens yearly "until something better" could be afforded. Whether he replied in evasive terms, or whether he let the Lällenkönig speak for him, is not on record.

By the time Holbein received this letter, written late in the autumn of 1532, he was plunged into a year of almost incredible activity. The whole of it would hardly seem too long for one such painting as the life-size double portrait—his largest extant portrait-painting—that now belongs to the National Gallery: "The Ambassadors" (Plate 28).

At the extremities of a heavy table, something like a rude dinner-waggon, are two

full-length figures which show a curious reflection of his early defect in their want of sufficient height. At the spectator's left stands a richly-costumed individual, whose stalwart proportions, ruddy complexion, and boldly ardent eye denote the perfection of vigorous health, and are in striking contrast to the physique, colouring, and expression of his companion. The former wears a black velvet doublet, which reveals an under-garment of gleaming rose-red satin. Over all is a black velvet mantle lined and trimmed with white fur. On his black cap is a silver brooch which displays a skull. He wears a gold badge exhibiting a mailed figure spearing a dragon suspended by a heavy gold chain. The hilt of his sword is seen at his left hand, and his right grasps a gold-sheathed dagger. On this latter is the inscription: *ÆT. SVÆ. 29*; and from it depends a massive green-and-gold silk tassel, incomparably painted.

As has been noted, the complexion of the man at our right is singularly pallid; the eyes mournfully listless; the skin of his knuckles drawn into the wrinkles of wasting tissues. He wears a scholar's cap and gown; the latter of some chocolate-brown pile, richly patterned, and lined with brown fur. He holds his gloves



"THE AMBASSADORS"  
*Oil. National Gallery*





in his right hand and leans this arm on a closed book, on the edges of which is the lettering: *ÆTATIS SVÆ* 25.

An oriental cover is spread on the table, and upon it are a number of the scientific instruments common to astrology and to the uses of astronomers like Kratzer, in whose portrait at the Louvre they are also to be seen. On the lower shelf are mathematical and musical instruments and books. The two latter are opened to display their text conspicuously. Near the man at our left, and kept open by a T-square, is the Arithmetic which Peter Apian, astronomer and globe-maker, published in 1527. It is opened at a page in Division, with its German text plainly legible and identical with the actual page, as seen in the British Museum's copy of this edition.

The book nearest the man at our right, lying beneath the lute, has been also identified as Luther's Psalm-book with music,—in which the German text is by himself and the music by Johann Walther—first published in 1524. Mr. Barclay Squire has shown that the two hymns could not, however, have faced each other in reality, as they do in the painting, without the intervening leaves having been

purposely suppressed to gain this end. These hymns are "Come Holy Ghost" (*Kom Heiliger Geyst Herregott*) and "Mortal, wouldst thou live blessedly?" (*Mensch wiltu leben seliglich*). In each case the entire verse is given.

The background is a green-diapered damask curtain most significantly drawn aside to show a silver crucifix high up in the left-hand corner, above the man with the dagger and sword. On the beautiful mosaic pavement is an ugly object that looks like some dried fish. But experiments have shown that the French Sale-Catalogues in which this work first appears in the eighteenth century—first, that is, so far as we can trace it by any records now known—were right in calling this a "skull in perspective"; *i.e.* a skull painted as seen distorted in a convex mirror. Some hint of its true character can be gathered, though not much, by looking at this object from the lower left-hand corner of the painting, when the exaggerated length will be seen to be reduced to something more nearly approaching the height of the usual "Death's Head."

According to the views which are now officially accepted by the National Gallery, the persons of this picture are two French Catholics. The one at our left is Jean de

## CHANCES AND CHANGES 149

Dinteville, Seigneur of Polisy, Bailly of Troyes and Knight of the French Order of St. Michael, of which he wears the badge without the splendid collar—as was permitted, by a special statute, to persons in the field, on a journey, or in a privacy that would not require the full dress of a state occasion. Jean de Dinteville was French Ambassador at the Court of Henry VIII. in 1533; born in 1504, he was then twenty-nine. He died in 1555.

The man in the scholar's cap and gown is George de Selve, privately associated with de Dinteville's mission for a few weeks in the spring of 1533. He was born in 1508, nominated Bishop of Lavaur in 1526, and confirmed in that office in 1529, in which year he was French Ambassador at the Court of Charles V. He was twenty-five in 1533, and died in 1541.

For myself, holding convictions concerning these portraits utterly at variance with any published opinions—and that in more than one vital respect—I am compelled to limit my account to the bare record of its appearance and catalogued description, until prepared to submit other facts and conclusions to a verdict. Two portraits in the Hague Gallery, each with a falcon hooded on the wrist, show to how much purpose Holbein had studied these birds

in the Steelyard. The one of Robert Cheseman, done in this year, is especially fine, with a strange, elusive suggestion of something kindred in the nature of man and bird.

In 1533, also, the Steelyard placed its contribution to the celebration of Anne Boleyn's coronation in the painter's hands. And the result was, as Stow tells us, "a costly and marvellous cunning pageant by the merchants of the Stilyard, wherein was the Mount Parnassus, with the Fountaine of Helicon, which was of white marble; and four streams without pipe did rise an ell high and mette together in a little cup above the fountaine; which fountaine ran abundantly with Rhenish wine till night. On the mountaine sat Apollo, and at his feet sat Calliope; and on every side of the mountaine sate four Muses, playing on severell sweet instruments."

But of more importance to his living fame were the two large oil paintings—the Triumph of Riches and the Triumph of Poverty—which he executed for the Hall of the Steelyard. In their day they were renowned far and wide; but they also have slipped into some abyss of oblivion, perhaps to be yet recovered as miraculously as was the Solothurn Madonna.

When the Guild was compelled to abandon

the Steelyard, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, the Hall stood so long unguarded and uncared for that when it regained possession, under James I., everything was in a sad state of neglect. And when the association finally dissolved not long after, the Hanseatic League agreed to present these paintings to Henry Prince of Wales, known, like Charles I., to be a lover of Art.

If they passed to the possession of the latter, he must have exchanged them with, or presented them to, the Earl of Arundel. For in 1627 Sandrart saw them in the collection of the latter, like his father an enthusiastic admirer of Holbein's work. After this, one or two vague notices suggest that they somehow drifted to Flanders, and thence to Paris. But there every trace of them is lost. Federigo Zuccherò thought they yielded to no work of the kind, even among Italian masters; and copied them from pure admiration. Holbein's drawing for the Triumph of Riches is in the Louvre Collection.

That he ever painted Anne Boleyn, unless in miniature, seems doubtful. The portrait among the Windsor drawings which has been labelled with her name agrees with no description of her in any single respect. But in 1534 he

painted one whose destiny was closely linked to hers—Thomas Cromwell, then Master of the Jewel House.

And it was probably about this time that he painted what is in some respects the greatest of all his portraits—one of the galaxy of supreme works of all portraiture—the oil painting of Morett, or Morette, so long regarded as a triumph of Leonardo da Vinci's art. The world knows it well in the Dresden Gallery (Plate 29).

The figure is life-size. The pose, even the costume in its feasible essentials, strikingly repeats the Whitehall portrait of Henry VIII., as copies show this to have been completed in the wall painting. The background is a green curtain.

The sitter wears neither velvet nor cloth-of-gold, nor Order of any sort ; but his costume is rich black satin, the sleeves puffed with white, the broad fur collar of sable. In his cap is a cameo brooch. His buttons are gold ; and a gold locket hangs from a plain, heavy chain of the same metal. His right hand carries his gloves, his left rests on the gold sheath of the dagger that hangs from his waist. His auburn, hair and beard is streaked with grey.

No words, no reproduction, can hope to ex-



THE MORETT PORTRAIT

*Oils. Dresden Gallery*





press the qualities of such a painting. Neither can show the mastery or the spell by which the green background, the hair, the cool transparent flesh-tones, the fur, the satin, the gold, are all woven into a witchery as virile as it is penetrating.

This is another work which has undergone more than one transformation in the course of its records. As late as 1657 it was correctly ascribed to Holbein in the Modena Collection. But the first syllable of the sitter's name has been its only constant. In time Morett slipped into Moretta, and then — like *Meier* in the Madonna picture—into Morus. So far it seems to have clung to some English tradition. But when Morus got changed to Moro it was but natural for an Italian to think of Ludovico Sforza, "Il Moro." Long before this Holbein had become Olbeno; and thereafter a puzzle. When the portrait was labelled Sforza, however, who could its obviously great painter be but Leonardo? *Et voila!* Thus the work passed to the Gallery and Catalogue of the Royal Collection at Dresden. And thus it long remained, as if to attest the true level of Holbein's genius.

But when the Gallery also acquired the drawing of the Arundel Collection, labelled "Mr.

Morett" in Hollar's engraving from it, the painting was held to be unquestionably identified by it as Hubert Morett, goldsmith to Henry VIII. Nor is there anything incongruous in this belief. Such a master goldsmith was no tradesman, in our sense of the word. He was often much more like one of our merchant princes. The merchants of the Steelyard were frequently the royal bankers, and many times were employed on high and delicate diplomatic missions to other courts. Neither is there anything in the sitter's dress to forbid it to a man of this stamp, even after the sumptuary laws of Henry VIII. were passed; while there is much, very much, to suggest an English origin.

On the other hand, M. Larpent has now shown that the Arundel drawing was down in a catalogue of 1746-7 as: "One Holbein, Sieur de Moret, one of the French hostage in England"; and also that a "Chas. sieur de Morette" is recorded among the four French hostages sent to England in 1519. It would thus appear that the painting is a portrait of Charles de Solier, seigneur de Morette; an eminent soldier and diplomatist of France; born in 1480, Ambassador to England more than once, and finally, in 1534.

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Besides all the portraits of Holbein's English period, many of them scattered throughout the collections of all Europe, and many others now lost, it must not be forgotten that he was at the same time pouring forth miniature paintings, designs for engraving, designs for the goldsmith, and conceptions of every sort—from a carved chimney-piece to a woman's jewelled trinket; and all designed with the same exquisite precision and felicity. In the British Museum as on the Continent these drawings are an education in themselves. And besides the portrait studies in the Windsor Collection there is a sketch for a large painting which, if ever executed, is lost: "The Queen of Sheba visiting King Solomon."

## CHAPTER IV

### PAINTER ROYAL

1536-1543

Queen Jane Seymour—Death of Erasmus, and title-page portrait—The Whitehall painting of Henry VIII.—Munich drawing of Henry VIII.—Birth of an heir and the “Jane Seymour Cup”—Death of the Queen—Christina, Duchess of Milan—Secret service for the King—Flying visit to Basel and arrangements for a permanent return—Apprentices his son Philip at Paris—Portrait of the Prince of Wales and the King’s return gift—Anne of Cleves—Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk—Catherine Howard—Lapse of Holbein’s Basel citizenship—Irregular ties—Provision for wife and children—Residence in London—Execution of Queen Catherine Howard—Marriage of Catherine Parr—Dr. Chamber—Unfinished work for the Barber-Surgeons’ Hall—Death of Holbein—His will—Place of burial—Holbein’s genius; its true character and greatness.

THESE were years of pleasant friendships, too, as well as work and cares. Nicholas Bourbon, scholar and poet, after his sojourn in London, writes back in 1536: “Greet in my name as heartily as you can all with whom you know me to be connected by intercourse and

friendship." And after mentioning high dignitaries who had followed the King's example of showing special courtesies to Bourbon, he adds: "Mr. Cornelius Heyss, my host, the King's Goldsmith; Mr. Nicolaus Kratzer, the King's Astronomer, a man who is brimful of wit, jest, and humorous fancies; and Mr. Hans, the Royal Painter, the Apelles of our time. I wish them from my heart all joy and happiness." This little pen-picture of Holbein's intimate circle is a beautiful break in the mists of centuries—and shows us what manner of men they were among whom he had made for himself an honoured place. We could ill spare it from the few and meagre records of his life. It is also the very earliest documentary evidence of his being in the King's immediate service.

It was in this very year, 1536, that he received his commission to paint Anne Boleyn's successor, Jane Seymour, then on the throne the block had left vacant. The Vienna Gallery possesses this painting, of which another version is at Woburn Abbey, and the chalk drawing at Windsor (Plate 30).

The Queen was noted for her milk-white fairness, and Holbein has borrowed the pearly shadows of the lily in rendering it. The figure is a little under life-size. Her head-dress and

robes of silver brocade and royal velvet are studded with splendid rubies and pearls to match the jewels on her neck and breast. The hands are as full of character as of art.

The Queen's portrait may properly be said to belong to the great wall painting which Holbein finished in 1537 for the Royal Palace at Whitehall. But before that date the painter's inner life had suffered one more great wrench. At midnight of July 12th, 1536, Erasmus died in the home that had been his own, except for the Freiburg interval, ever since John Froben's death in 1526; a death that had probably had much to do with Holbein's first departure from Basel. That event had uprooted the scholar from the old house *zum Sessel*, in the Fischmarkt, and transplanted him to the home of Froben's son, Hieronymus. The latter house, then known as *zum Luft*, is now No. 18, Bäumleingasse. And it was here that Erasmus passed away, his mind keeping to the last its humour and its interests in all around him. But no one, remembering how Fisher and More had died in the preceding year, can doubt but that the good old man was very willing to be gone, away from changed faces and changed ways—though Bonifacius Amerbach and young Froben were as sons to him.



QUEEN JANE SEYMOUR  
*Oil. Vienna Gallery*





Basel, for all her differences with him, buried Erasmus with great honours. But no tablet could so commemorate him as the noble monument which Holbein built to him in the title-page he designed for Hieronymus Froben's edition of Erasmus's *Works*, published in 1540. It is a woodcut of extraordinary beauty. The full-length figure of the scholar stands in cap and gown, with one hand resting lightly on the bust of the god Terminus (the god of immovable boundary lines, significantly conjoined to Erasmus's chosen motto: *Concedo nulli*) and the other calling attention to this significant emblem of fixed convictions. Not even the Louvre oil painting expresses the whole Erasmus quite so completely or so nobly as this little drawing of the man whom Holbein had loved and revered for twenty years; and to whom he owed, in the first place, the splendid opportunities of his career in England.

And as he drew it, what ghosts of his own Past must have clustered around the lean little figure! What echoes and visions! The Rhine, the gardens, the clang of the press, the Fischmarkt, the friendly smiles at Froben's and Meyer's firesides; his marriage; the stars and dews and perfume of all his dreams in the years—those matchless years of a man's young

manhood—when he had walked with angels as well as peasants, had seen the Way of the Cross, the Christ in the Grave, and the Risen Lord even more clearly than the faces of flesh and blood. *Eheu fugaces!* “God help thee, Elia, how art thou sophisticated.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah, well! Those years, and the darker, sadder years that had led far from them, were now like his oldest friends—dead and buried. The Holbein of 1537 was painting the King of England on the wall of his Privy Chamber. There was a place for honest pride as well as for honest regret in his thoughts.

This painting perished with the palace in the fire of 1698. Charles II., however, had a small copy of it made by Leemput. And a portion of Holbein's original cartoon (Plate 31) in chalk and Indian ink, is in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire—the face much washed out by cleaning, and the outline pricked for transferring to the wall. The figures are life-size, but Walpole has already noticed how the massive proportions and solidly-planted pose of the King heighten the illusion of a Colossus. Behind him stands the admirably contrasted figure of Henry VII. The whole composition



KING HENRY VIII AND HIS FATHER

*(Fragment of Cartoon used for the Whitehall Wall-Painting)*

*Duke of Devonshire's Collection*



consisted of four portraits; Queen Jane Seymour opposite her husband, and the King's mother opposite to, and on a level with, Henry VII., who stands on the elevation of the background.

The pose and costume of Henry VIII. in the cartoon were, as Leemput's copy shows, faithfully carried out in the painting; but in the latter the face was afterwards turned to the full front view familiar to us in the many copies of the King's portrait which so long passed as works of Holbein, on the strength of reproducing his own painting. There is no evidence that he ever again painted Henry VIII. or that he executed any replica of this portrait. The old copy at Windsor Castle serves, however, to recall its details of costume; such as his brown doublet stiff with gold brocade and scintillating with the gleams of splendid jewels, his coat of royal red embroidered with gold thread and lined with ermine to match the wide collar; his plumed and jewelled cap; as also the huge gems on collar, pendant, rings, and the gold-hilted dagger in its blue velvet sheath.

But Holbein's own portrait of Henry VIII.—as shown by the original chalk study from life now in the Munich Gallery (Plate 32)—may in

all sobriety of speech be called a stupendous work. Looking at this marvellous drawing and picturing to one's self those cheeks informed with pulsing blood, those lips with breath, those eyes with blue gleams,—it is easy to understand that Van Mander was using no hyperbole when he said that the painting on the wall of the Privy Chamber made the stoutest knees to tremble. It was literally, as he said, “a terrible painting,” of which none of the stupidly-heavy copies that have for the most part travestied Holbein's work give any true conception. Many a man could paint cloth-of-gold and gems; but only once and again in the centuries comes a man who can thus paint, not alone the mane and stride of the lion, but the fires that light his glance, the roar rushing to his lips. To look long into these eyes that Holbein had the genius to read and the firmness to draw, is to feel one's self in the grip of an insatiable, implacable, yet leonine soul; a being who, to borrow the matchless description of Burke's political career, is “parted asunder in his works like some vast continent severed by a convulsion of nature; each portion peopled by its own giant race of opinions, differing altogether in features and language, and committed in eternal hostility



KING HENRY VIII

*(Life-study; probably for the Whitehall Painting)*

*Chalks. Munich Collection*





with one another." And so long as the great drama of Tudor-England enthralled the minds of men, hard by Shakespeare's supreme name must be read the name of the painter in whose pages the actors in that drama have been compelled themselves to declare themselves.

To crown the King's pride, and to the no less intense delight of the whole nation which saw in this event the rainbow of every promise, at Hampton Court, on the 12th of October, 1537, Queen Jane Seymour gave birth to the son who was to reign so briefly as Edward VI. And it was doubtless in connection with this happy circumstance that the King commissioned Holbein's design for a truly royal piece of goldsmith's work. This drawing, generally known as "the Jane Seymour cup," is at Oxford, in the Bodleian Library (Plate 33).

No sketch of the artist's powers would be even barely complete without a realising sense of their versatility. And in this design Holbein has more than equalled the highest achievement of his great contemporary, Benvenuto Cellini, at this time in the service of the French Court. The initials of the King and Queen, H. and J., and the exceedingly judicious motto of the latter—"Bound to obey

and to serve"—are recurring devices. But it is in the originality and unflawed beauty of the whole—the springing grace of outline, the taste and cunning with which flowers of gold naturally bloom into gems and pearls, the combination of freest, richest fancy with every restraint of a pure taste—that the perfection of this little masterpiece consists.

In the midst of all the public rejoicings, the Te Deums, feasts, and bonfires, came the thunderclap of the young mother's death. Some negligence had permitted her to take cold, and on the twelfth day after his coveted heir was born, Henry VIII. was once again a widower. The Court went into deepest mourning until the 3rd of February. But Thomas Cromwell was very shortly authorised to take secret steps to ascertain what Princess might most suitably fill the late Queen's vacant place and strengthen the assurance of an unbroken succession.

Choice fell at first on a Roman Catholic—Christina, the sixteen-year-old widow of Francis Sforza Duke of Milan, who had died in the autumn of 1535. The upshot of private inquiries was that Holbein was sent over to Brussels in March, 1538, to bring back a portrait of this daughter of Christian of Denmark and niece



DESIGN FOR "THE JANE SEYMOUR CUP"

*Bodleyan Library*



of Charles V. And although the painter had but three hours in which to do it, he did make what Hutton described as her "very perfflight" image; besides which, said the envoy, the portrait previously despatched, though painted in all her state finery, "was but slobbered."

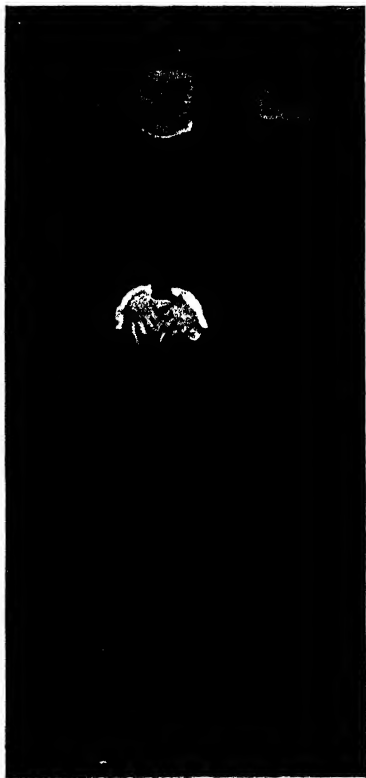
From this "perfflight" painting, which could not have been more than one of his portrait studies, he afterwards completed that full-length oil painting which is worthy to rank with his great Morett portrait. By the kindness of the Duke of Norfolk, who has lent it, this beautiful work is now in the National Gallery (Plate 34). But unhappily for its best appreciation, to my thinking at least, it hangs at one side and in too close proximity to the bold colouring of "The Ambassadors"; so that its own subtle, yet reticent superiority is well-nigh shouted down by its lusty neighbour. It is a picture to be seen by itself; as it must stand by itself in the usual inane gallery of women's portraits.

Hutton tells us that the painter who "slobbered" Christina's portrait had painted her in full dress. But Holbein's eye was quick to recognise the values of her everyday dress -- the widow's costume of Italy -- in enhancing the distinction of her face and the stately slenderness of her figure. And so he drew her as she

stood, with a hint of bending forward, her gloves being restlessly fingered in a shy yet proud embarrassment, in the first moments when he saw her.

The portrait is nearly life-size. Over a plain black satin dress she wears a gown of the same material, lined with yellow sable. Her hair is entirely concealed by a black hood. At her throat and wrists are plain cambric frills. The ranging scale of tawny tones—in the floor, the gloves, the fur, the golden glint in her brown eyes—and the one ruby, on her hand, are the only colours, except those of her fresh young lips and skin and the black and white of her costume. "She is not so white as the late Queen," wrote Hutton, "but she hath a singular good countenance, and when she chanceth to smile there appeareth two pits in her cheeks and one in her chin, the which becometh her excellently well."

It is easy to believe that they did, but her dimples did not chance for Henry VIII. Whether she really sent him, along with her picture, the witty refusal credited to her—that she had but one head; had she two, one should be at His Majesty's service—or whether it was the Emperor's doing entirely that his niece married the Duke of Lorraine instead of the man



CHRISTINA OF DENMARK, DUCHESS OF MILAN

*Oils. National Gallery*

*[Lent by the Duke of Norfolk]*





whose first wife had been Charles V.'s aunt, there is, at all events, a soft lurking devil in the demure little face which seems to whisper that the answer was one which she could have made an' she would.

Van Mander heard from Holbein's circle a story which modern pedantry is inclined to flout. This is, that when an irate nobleman wanted the painter punished for an affront, the King hotly exclaimed :—"Understand, my lord, that I can make seven earls out of as many hinds, any day ; but out of seven earls I could not make one such painter as this Holbein." An eminently *ben-trovato* story, at all events. And certain it is that the painter stood sufficiently high in the royal favour to be despatched on some special private mission for the King in the summer of 1538, of which the secret was so well kept that nothing beyond the record of payment for it has ever transpired.

From this date Holbein's name is regularly down in the Royal Accounts. The amounts drawn total, it has been computed, about £360 in present value, and would make an agreeable annual addition to his other earnings. So that it is little wonder he was not tempted by the small sum offered by the Basel Council in 1532. But in 1538 the Council greatly in-

creased the old offer, and was so anxious to have him among her citizens that the painter seized the opportunity of his secret mission to Upper Burgundy, whatever it was, to pay a flying visit to Basel in the interests of his family.

\* \* \* \* \*

His old companions of the Guild of St. Johann Vorstadt made this visit—when Holbein was back among them, as was noted, “in silk and velvet”—the occasion of a grand banquet in his honour. But the real motive for his visit was to arrange upon what terms he could meet the Council’s wishes. The terms were far from ungenerous, as is shown by the contract which followed him back to London.

In this the Council bound itself, in consideration of the great honour of retaining in their city a painter “famous beyond all other painters on account of the riches of his art,” and in further consideration of his promise to make no absence from Basel more prolonged than should be really necessary to carry his foreign commissions to their destination and receive his pay for them—to give him an annuity of fifty guldens, equally whether Holbein should be ill or well, but only during his own life. In addition to this, they granted him permission

to make short visits to specified art-centres, of which Milan was one, "once, twice, or thrice, every year." And recognising the impossibility of his freeing himself from his English engagements in less than two years, they also granted him this interval before he need resume his residence at Basel; and engaged to pay forty guldens yearly to his wife, on his behalf, for each of these two years.

There is every probability that Holbein himself took a goodly sum to Basel to invest for his family's permanent benefit in one way and another. For it could only have been as a part of this gleaning for them that he drew—as the Account Books show that he did just at this juncture—a whole year's salary in advance from the Royal Exchequer; seeing that the same books prove that he was liberally paid for all his own expenses on the King's service, in addition to his regular salary.

Part of the sum he collected to take with him was doubtless used to apprentice his son Philip, now sixteen, to the goldsmith's trade. And that the father chose Paris for this purpose, where he left Philip on his return journey, might well be due either to his own estimation of Jerome David, to whom Philip was indentured, or to the fact that Benvenuto Cellini's

presence at Paris afforded some advantage ; or that his own promised return to Basel would make it preferable to have the lad on the same side of the Channel as all his family. And that Holbein fully intended to make the necessary and obvious sacrifice involved in exchanging London for Basel is also proved by a contemporary account. "His intention was," says his fellow-townsmen, "had God lengthened his life, to paint many of his pictures again at his own expense, as well as the hall in the Rathaus. The paintings on the *Haus zum Tanz* he pronounced 'pretty good.'" But it was not to be.

His New Year's offering to the King on the opening of 1539 was a portrait, probably the oil painting in the Hague Gallery, of the infant Prince of Wales. It was a spirited picture of the royal baby with his gold rattle in his chubby little fist, such as might have delighted a father less doting than Henry VIII., whose return gift is recorded: "To Hans Holbyne, paynter, a gilte cruse with a cover, weighing x oz. 1 quarter." The cruse was made by a friend of the painter ; that Cornelius Hayes, goldsmith, whom Bourbon's letter mentioned, in connection with him in 1536.

All these months the negotiations for the

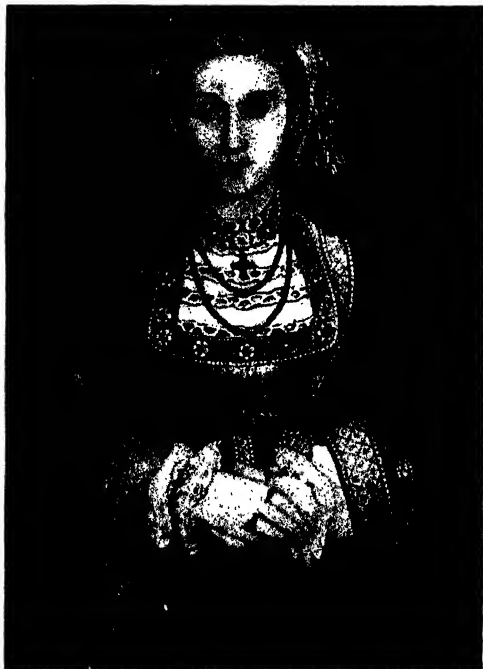
hand of the Duchess of Milan had fluctuated with the varying fortunes of the King's relations with her uncle, Charles V. But at last they had altogether collapsed with what seemed to Henry VIII. the threatening attitude assumed by the Emperor and the Pope. Hereupon followed that historical chapter, so full of fatal consequences to Cromwell, and no less big with shame for the King's own story: the pitiful chapter of Anne of Cleves.

Her brother, the Duke of Cleves, was at this time a troublesome foe to the Emperor; while the fact that she was a Protestant was a "Roland" for the Imperial and Papal "Oliver." So Holbein was again posted off to bring back a counterfeit of Anne, and to carry to her a miniature of the King. And by the 1st September he had acquitted himself of the new mission.

There is not an iota of historical or other evidence for that "Flanders mare" anecdote, which seems to have had a gratuitous as well as spontaneous origin in Bishop Burnet's seventeenth-century brain, to the effect that the King was the victim of a flattering portrait by Holbein, and cruelly undeceived by the actual looks of his bride. In the first place his agents wrote to him frankly that the Princess was of

no great beauty, though not uncomely, and "never from the ellebowe of the Ladye Duchesse her Mother," who was said to be most unwilling to part with her (as a mother might well be, for the husband in question). The King was also told that she was quite unskilled in languages or music, and held, with her mother, that it was "for a rebuke and an occasion of lightenesse that great Ladyes shuld be lernyd or have enye knowledge of musike." And in the next place even a superficial knowledge of Holbein would disprove any tradition of "flattery" from his unflinching, almost brutally truthful brush. It was hardly likely that the painter who would not stoop to flatter Bishop Stokesley, or Henry VIII. himself, would be swerved from his good faith by Anne of Cleves.

On the contrary, the painting, in oils on vellum and mounted on a panel, now in the Louvre (Plate 35), is the very embodiment of contemporary accounts of this Princess. Her fair-skinned, commonplace, yet "not uncomely" face looks out placidly at you from the quaint Flemish head-dress of fine gauze and jewelled cloth-of-gold. Her inert hands (Holbein's hands, belong to his truth-telling revelations), jewelled even on the thumb, are listlessly clasped upon



ANNE OF CLEVES

*Oil. The Louvre*





each other ; her crimson-velvet dress is heavily banded with gold and pearl embroidery.

No Venus certainly, and perhaps somewhat heavily handicapped by the maternal "elbowe." But still perfectly in keeping with her descriptions and making no denial to the French Ambassador's statement that she was "the gentlest and kindest" of queens ; or to an English eye-witness who writes that at her coronation the people all applauded her for being "so fayre a Ladye, of so goodly a stature and so womanly a countenance, and in especial of so good qualities."

The fact is that the King's very cruelty to this poor girl—torn from her mother's side and her Protestant home in Dürren to be the pawn of an unscrupulous diplomacy—was based on grounds, at least, less infamous than that of a slave-buyer. After both Cromwell and Holbein had been well rewarded for their services, the former lost his head and the Queen her crown on considerations that took no more account of her looks than her feelings. The Catholic glass had risen ; the King himself was not ashamed to avow it ; and the Protestant alliance was therefore an incubus. After some two months of a queen's and wife's estate, poor Anne of Cleves was bid to pack her belongings and take

up a separate establishment as an unmarried woman. No wonder she fainted when first informed of such an infamy.

But there was no law in England save the *fiat* of Henry VIII. The marriage was pronounced "null and void," and Anne retired into private life, on the rigid condition that she would make no attempt to ever quit England, with an allowance of £3,000 a year, and the formal title of the King's "sister." There was no help for her. Never again for her would there be the austere joys of Dürren—her mother's side, her own timid dreams of other companionship, and never the price at which she had lost them.

At the head of the triumphant anti-Protestant, anti-Cromwell party stood Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk, whose portrait, in the Royal Collection at Windsor, Holbein painted about this time (Plate 36). The lean face and the figure clothed in red stand out strikingly from the plain green background, although the painting has suffered not a little injury. The robe is lined and trimmed with ermine, and over it is the collar and badge of the Order of the Garter. In his right hand he holds the gold baton of his office as Earl Marshal, and in his left the White Staff of the Lord Chamberlain.



THOMAS HOWARD, THIRD DUKE OF NORFOLK

*Oils. Windsor Castle*



According to Roper, Norfolk, then Earl of Surrey, was a great friend of Sir Thomas More. But it would be hard to imagine a greater contrast than the records of the two men. The latter a pattern of personal purity and lofty ideals; the former as venal as the King's Parliaments, and as unscrupulous in pursuit of his passions as the King himself.

Norfolk's star of influence had already waxed and waned with the evil destinies of one niece, before it arose anew with the fortunes of another only to plunge sharply after them into the gulf of ruin. For the present he and Gardiner, restored to favour with him, were all-powerful. Their calculations seemed to prosper, too, beyond their most ambitious dreams, when, instead of ruling through a rival to Anne who should be the King's mistress, they were to rule through a legal successor. For the King was nothing if not technically correct; and from the moment when the fatal royal glance flamed on Catherine Howard when Gardiner was entertaining him, nothing would do but she should become his wife. And thus once more the wild wheel of Fortune was to make Norfolk uncle to a  
• Queen of England.

Anne was divorced on the 12th of July, 1540,

and on the 28th of the same month, on the very day when Thomas Cromwell was beheaded, the King married Anne Boleyn's cousin, Catherine Howard. On the 8th of August she was proclaimed Queen, and on the 15th of that month she was publicly prayed for as such in all the churches of the realm. Well might she be! Dry your outraged tears, Anne of Cleves, and give thanks to God that you are well out of it!

There is a miniature in the Windsor Collection now believed to be Holbein's portrait of Catherine Howard. Until recently it was held to be the portrait of Catherine Parr. But there is a larger portrait of the former among the Windsor drawings, a study evidently made for an oil painting (Plate 37). By this it seems that she had auburn hair, hazel eyes, a fair complexion, and a piquant smile. There is a painting which accords with this drawing in the Duke of Buccleuch's collection, but it is said to be by a French artist.

In the autumn of this year, 1540, the two years of absence expired which had been granted to Holbein by his contract with the Basel Council. But he had now formed ties which were too powerful to yield to Basel's.<sup>7</sup> Those plans of painting again the walls by



CATHERINE HOWARD  
*Chalk Drawing. Windsor Castle*





' which coming generations would judge him, the resolve to try again if he and Elsbeth might not manage to live in peace under one roof where the children, who were strangers to him, should come to know and be known by him in something more than name, were all relinquished. They must certainly have been relinquished on some definite mutual understanding, and at a "compensation" agreed upon between him and Elsbeth and his stepson, Franz Schmidt; because it must have been Holbein himself who enabled Franz, acting on his mother's behalf, to take over as he did the entire legacy—a snug little competency in itself—to which Holbein fell heir in this autumn by the bequest of his uncle, Sigmund Holbein, citizen of Berne. Philip having been launched by his father in the goldsmith's craft, there only remained the second son and two daughters at home. Thus so far as mere money went, Holbein might now think himself discharged from the support of his family, and free to divert his future earnings from them. And, as has been said, the Will and Inventory proved at Elsbeth's death, six years after her husband's, that he had •made no bad provision for them in the matter of material comforts, however remiss his conduct in its moral aspects.

The Royal Accounts break off in 1541, but the Subsidy Roll for the City of London has a very precious item for Holbein's biography in the October of this year. This announces that "Hanns Holbene" is among the "straungers" then residing in "the Parisshe of Saint Andrew Undershafte," and that he is assessed as such.

Not only the Windsor chalk drawings, but the paintings at Vienna, Berlin, and other Continental galleries, show the pressure, as well as the high level of quality, at which he was now working. These portraits are among almost his very best, while the one shortly to be mentioned is quite among them.

By the summer of 1542 the tragedy of Catherine Howard was over. That Royal Progress, like more than one of its forerunners, had become the royal shame. This time it was a shame so black and so wide that within two years, after madness and death had purged the complicity of many, there still remained so many more involved in the sins and follies of Norfolk's niece that the ordinary prisons were unable to contain all that were arraigned; a shame so bitter that when the proofs of it were first laid before Henry VIII. the Privy Council quaked to see him shed tears. It was, they

said with awe, "a strange thing in his courage!" The guilty woman had her own tears to shed in expiation; but in the dawn of February 12th, 1542, she walked to the block as full of wilful, cheerful audacity, and as careful of her toilet, as she had ever gone to meet her royal lover. And so the auburn head of the King's fifth wife rolled from the axe that had severed her guilty cousin's.

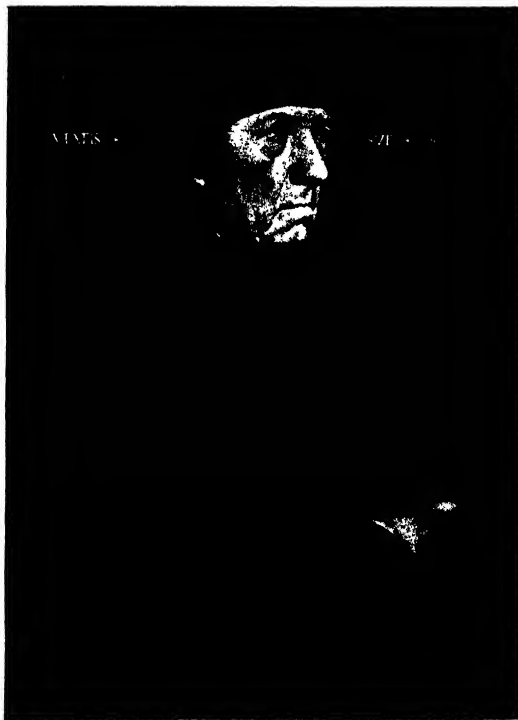
On July 12th, 1543, the "next" year as it then began, the King married Catherine Parr. She had been twice widowed and was about to marry Sir Thomas Seymour when the King interfered, and she became his wife instead; though one can well credit the story that she tremblingly told him, "It were better to be his mistress." She was a good woman, a generous stepmother, and a good wife. But there is plenty of probability for the assertion that her own death had been debated with the King when her wit delayed it, and his death set her free to marry at last the man from whom the King had snatched her.

It was formerly believed, as has been said, that Holbein had painted her miniature—the one at Windsor, now declared to be the portrait of Catherine Howard. About this time he must have painted the great portrait of which

mention has been made. This is the oil portrait of Dr. Chamber, the King's physician, now in the Vienna Gallery (Plate 38). The sitter was, as the inscription shows, eighty-eight years old; and the strong, stern face is full of that "inward" look which comes to the faces of men whose meat and drink has been a lifetime of heavy responsibilities. He had been associated with the Charter of the College of Physicians in 1518, and was also instrumental in that of the Guild of "Barbers and Surgeons," in 1541. And it was probably through him and Dr. Butts, another physician to the King whom Holbein had painted and who was likewise a Master of the new Guild, that he undertook to paint a large work for their hall—Henry VIII. granting their Charter to the Master-Surgeons kneeling before him.

This work Holbein did not live to finish; and it is to-day exceedingly doubtful as to how much of the smoke-blackened painting is by him. The very drawing has a woodenness foreign to his compositions, and much of the painting is by an evidently inferior hand. But good judges hold some of the heads to be undoubtedly his work.

However this may be, with the autumn of 1543 Holbein's life came to a sudden close.



DR. CHAMBER  
*Oils. Vienna Gallery*



Van Mander, wrong as to the date by eleven years which have fathered a host of spurious *Holbeins* on the Histories of Art, is apparently right as to the cause of death—"the Plague." By the great discovery of Hans Holbein's Will, found by Mr. Black in 1861 among the archives of St. Paul's Cathedral, it is proved that the painter made his Will on October 7th, and must have died between this and November 29th, 1543, when administration was granted to one of his executors (the other would seem to have perished, meanwhile, from the same epidemic). This surviving executor was an old friend of the artist, whose portrait, in the Windsor Gallery, he had painted eleven years before—Hans of Antwerp, a master-goldsmith of the Steelyard.

The Will bears about it evident signs of having been made in great haste and mental disturbance. But it accomplished all that Holbein probably had at heart; that is, the ensuring that whatsoever moneys could be collected from his accounts, or by the sale of "all my goodes and also my horse," should first be applied to clear a couple of specified debts, and the rest be managed for the sole benefit of "my two chylde which be at nurse." From the very fact that nothing as to the identity or where-



abouts of these babies is mentioned, it is clear that Holbein relied on the verbal instructions which he had given to his trusted friends and to their complete understanding of all the circumstances as well as of his wishes. He was only concerned, apparently, that such small means as could thus be saved for them should not be permitted to pass to his legal heirs.

No other heirs are mentioned; no other legacy is made. From the Will alone one who did not know otherwise would suppose that he had no other family or relatives in existence. The Plague left no man in its neighbourhood much leisure for explanations. Stowe records that the one of that autumn was such "a great death" that the Law Courts had to be transferred to St. Albans. But two things seem to speak in this curt document. First, that by the transference of his uncle Sigmund's little fortune to Franz Schmidt (as trustee for Elsbeth and the children of her marriage with Holbein), which the archives prove took place three years earlier, and by his other arrangements for his family at Basel and for Philip at Paris, Holbein held himself free of any further responsibility for their support, and, indeed, determined that they should not obtain possession of the residue in London.

Secondly, that if the mother of his two illegitimate children had lived with him in London as his wife, she must have just died—perhaps in childbed, perhaps of the Plague. She is not in any way referred to. And there is something in the very signs of confusion and distress throughout the wording of the Will which seems to exhale a far-away anguish—sudden parting, sad apprehensions, keenest anxiety for “my two chylder which be at nurse.” There comes before the eye a picture of the five grave men—Holbein, his two executors, the one a goldsmith, the other an armourer, and his two witnesses, a “merchaunte” and a “paynter”—hurrying along the plague-infected streets to get this document legalised as some protection for two motherless babies, in the event of their father’s death. No man knew whose turn would come within the hour.

And by November 29th Holbein’s had come, and one executor’s also, apparently. The Latin record of administration on this date is that it has been consigned to John Anwarpe (Johann or Hans of Antwerp), and accepted by him in accordance with “the last will of John, alias Hans Holbein, recently deceased in the parish of Saint Andrew Undershaft.”

It would seem probable, then, that the painter was buried in this church rather than in the closely adjoining church of Saint Catharine-Cree to which tradition assigned his body. But the horrors of such an epidemic as that in which the painter was swept suddenly away make it easy to understand how even such a man as he had now become could die unnoticed and be buried in an unrecorded grave. When the Earl of Arundel, a few years later, sought to learn where he might set up a monument to one he so greatly admired, there was only this vague and uncorroborated rumour that the painter was buried in Saint Catharine-Cree. And so no monument was built to mark the spot where Holbein's "measure of sliding sand" had been spilled at last.

But, as they ran, those sands had measured more than "*a great portrait-painter.*" They had measured Greatness; greatness which is not to be delimited by the wanton outrages of man or the accidents of time. Both have had their share in the judgments of generations that have lost all his greatest and nearly all his imaginative creations. And what the Spoiler has spared, the self-styled Restorer has too often ruined. Self-love, on the other hand, and family pride have been engaged to preserve

those portraits by which it is now the fashion to mulct him of his far larger dues.

Of his mysticism, of the symbolism in which his "Journal Intime" is written in his own firm cipher, this little book is not the place to speak; though for those who have once come to know the true Holbein these have a spell, a stern, inexhaustible enchantment all their own.

But study the few fortunate survivals of his imaginative works, study even more the wrecks and skeletons of his loftier conceptions, and ask yourself if it could be by only a quick eye and a clever hand (and he had both, assuredly) that Holbein caught up the dying ember of the Van Eycks' torch and fanned it by his originality, his fancy, his winged realism, until its light lit up the dim ways of Man with a clairvoyance far beyond theirs. This eye, this mind, flung its gleaming penetration into every covert of the soul and deep, deep, deep into the most shrouded, the most shuddering secrets of Mortality.

Was it by virtue of a mere portrait-painter's powers that the son of the Augsburg Bohemian came to lay his finger upon the very core and composition of perhaps the haughtiest, the subtlest, the most dread despot since the Cæsars? Henry VIII. and Fisher; the Laïs Corinthiaca,

the Duchess of Milan, his brooding wife ; dancing children, and dancing Death ; Christ on the Cross, Christ in the Grave, Christ Arisen ; lambs in the fields, woods and hills, gaping peasants, wild battle ;—put them side by side, the poor ghosts of them left to us, and compute the range of art—"the majestic range" that framed them all.

Let us be just. Let us forget for a moment the chirp of the family housekeeper over her gods. Let us gather up the broken fragments that are more than the meal, and humbly own the Miracle that created them. It is idle to argue with the intelligence that can see "a want of imagination" in Holbein. But we can find proof and to spare that it is not so ; that his so-called "limitations"—apart from method, which is a matter of Epoch—are due to a creed we may or may not agree with, but surely must respect. The creed that Beauty is the framework, the ornament, rather than the substance of things ; the pleasure, not the purpose of "this mortal" ; and that the sweetest flower that blows is but an exquisite moment of transfigured clay.

He smells the mould above the rose ; yet how he draws the rose ! The brazen arrogance of pomp, the pearl on a woman's neck, the

shimmer of a breaking bubble, the wrinkles in a baby's foot, the beauty of life, the pathos of life, the irony and the lust of life,—he has painted them all, as he saw them all, in the phantasmagoric Procession of Being betwixt garret and throne.

He has painted each, too, with that genius for seizing the essential quality which *is* the thing, that never forsook him from Augsburg to Saint Andrew's Undershaft ; that singular, vivid, original genius which can well afford to let his grave be forgotten, whose works build for him, as Hans Holbein—

*One of the few, the immortal names  
That were not born to die.*

A CATALOGUE OF THE PRINCIPAL  
EXISTING WORKS OF  
HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER

ARRANGED, SO FAR AS CAN BE KNOWN,  
IN CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

\*\* signifies—*Superlative qualities.*

\*   "   —*(Of some particular importance.*

†   "   —*Authorities differ.* Held by some (and by the writer)  
to have been, in its original condition, the work of  
Holbein's own hand.

I.

EARLIEST INDIVIDUAL WORKS (BEFORE GOING  
TO BASEL)

? St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Barbara. Oils.  
(Wings of the St. Sebastian altar-piece.) Munich  
Gallery.

Virgin and Child. Oils. Basel Museum. (Earliest  
signed work known. Dated 1514.)

II.

FIRST BASEL PERIOD

(1515, 1516, 1519-1526)

Illustrations to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. Eighty-two  
pen-and-ink sketches on the margins. Original copy,  
Basel Museum.

Portrait of an unknown young man. Oils. Grand-  
Ducal Museum, Darmstadt.

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Jacob Meyer zum Hasen and his second wife, Dorothea Kannegiesser. [Plates 4 and 5.] Oils. Basel Museum.  
 Bonifacius Amerbach. [Plate 6.] Oils. Basel Museum.  
 Portrait of himself. [Frontispiece.] Coloured Chalks. Basel Museum.

\* Studies from Nature. (A bat outspread and a lamb.) Drawings in water-colour and silver-point. Basel Museum.

Designs for armorial windows. (More especially those with *Landsknechte* and one with three peasants gossiping.) Washed Drawings. Basel Museum and Print Cabinet, Berlin.

*Landsknechte* in a hand-to-hand fight. [Plate 7.] Washed Drawing. Basel Museum. Others in various collections.

Design for the wings of an organ-case. Washed Drawings. Basel Museum.

Head of St. John the Evangelist. Oils. Basel Museum.  
 The Last Supper. (On wood; ruined fragment.) Oils. Basel Museum.

The Nativity [Plate 8] and The Adoration. Oils. Freiburg Cathedral. (Wings of a lost altar-piece.)

Holy Family. Washed Drawing. Basel Museum. (Also other drawings of the Virgin and Child.)

The Passion. Eight-panelled altar-piece. [Plate 9.] Oils. Basel Museum. (Utterly ruined by over-painting.)

\* The Passion. A series of ten designs for glass-painting. Washed Drawings. Basel Museum. (A set of seven reversed impressions in the British Museum.)

The Man of Sorrows and the Mater Dolorosa. Oils, in tones of brown. Basel Museum.

Christ borne to the ground by the weight of the cross. A Washed Drawing and a \* Woodcut (unique impression). Basel Museum.



- \* Christ in the grave. [Plate 10.] Oils. Basel Museum.
- ? The risen Christ and Mary Magdalen at the sepulchre. [Plate 11.] Oils. Hampton Court Gallery. (Very much injured.)
- St. George. Oils. Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.
- St. Ursula       "       "       "
- ? Portrait of a young girl. [Plate 13.] Drawing in chalk and silver-point. Jabach Collection. The Louvre.
- \*\* The Solothurn Madonna. [Plate 12.] Oils. Solothurn Museum. ("Die Zetter'sche Madonna von Solothurn," of which the remarkable history is given in the text; together with the evident relationship of Plate 13 and the hypothesis of the present writer in that connection.)
- \*\* Portrait of Erasmus. [Plate 14.] Oils. The Louvre.
- A Citizen's Wife, and others, in the dress of the time. Washed Drawings. Basel Museum.
- The Table of Cebes. Border for title-page. Woodcut. Royal Print Cabinet, Berlin.
- St. Peter and St. Paul; on the title-page of Adam Petri's reprint of Luther's translation of the New Testament.
- Alphabet of "The Dance of Death." Woodcuts. Proof-impressions in the Basel Museum, the British Museum, and the Dresden Royal Collection.
- Bible Pictures: illustrating Old Testament. Woodcuts.
- \*\* "Images of Death." [Two shown at Plates 14 and 15.] Proof-impressions, some sets incomplete, in the Basel Museum, British Museum and the National Print Collections of Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Dresden, Karlsruhe, and the Bodleian Library. (This is the immortal series of Woodcuts, often called "The Dance of Death," done for the Trechsel Brothers of Lyons, but not published there until many years later.)

## PRINCIPAL EXISTING WORKS 191

Dorothea Offenburg as the Goddess of Love. [Plate 16.] Oils. Basel Museum.

The above as Laïs Corinthiaea. Oils. Basel Museum.

\*\* The Meyer Madonna. [Plates 18 and 19.] Oils. Grand-Ducal Collection, Darmstadt (superbly restored); and ?Dresden Gallery. (Notwithstanding the many and eminent authorities who hold this to be a copy, there still remain a sufficiency of no less eminent authorities to warrant the present writer in her unshaken opinion that, at any rate in its first estate and in the main, this Dresden version—revered for more than one century as such by the highest authorities—was the creation of Holbein's own hand.)

### III.

#### FIRST LONDON PERIOD

(1526-1528)

Portrait of Sir Thomas More. Oils. Mr. Huth's Collection. Chalk Drawing at Windsor. [Plate 20.] (Also a drawing of Sir John More, father of the above.)

\* John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. [Plate 21.] Chalk Drawing. Windsor Castle. (Another in the British Museum.)

Archbishop Warham. Oils. The Louvre, and Lambeth Palace.

? John Stokesley, Bishop of London. Oils. Windsor Castle. Sir Henry Guildford. [Plate 22.] Oils. Windsor Castle. Lady Guildford. Oils. Mr. Frewen's Collection.

Sir Thomas Godsalve and his son John. Oils. Dresden Gallery.

Chalk Drawing of Sir John Godsalve. Windsor Castle. Nicholas Kratzer, Astronomer Royal to King Henry VIII. [Plate 23.] Oils. The Louvre.

Sir Henry Wyat. Oils. The Louvre.

Sir Bryan Tuke, Treasurer of the Household to King Henry VIII. Oils. Munich Gallery. [Plate 24.] Also at Grosvenor House. (As stated in the text, the writer holds that the portraits of Sir Bryan Tuke should properly be classed with those of a later period. But they are given here in accordance with opinions which obtain at present.)

#### IV.

#### LAST BASEL PERIOD

(1528-1531)

\*\* Portrait group of Holbein's wife, Elsbeth, and his two eldest children. [Plate 25.] Oils, on paper. Basel Museum. (Outline hard from having been cut out and mounted.)

King Rehoboam replying to his people, and \*\* Samuel denouncing Saul. [Plate 26.] Two Washed Drawings. Basel Museum. (These are the designs for "the back wall" of the Basel Council Chamber.)

"Portrait of an English Lady" (unknown). Chalk Drawing. Basel Museum.

\*\* Portrait of an unknown young man in a broad-brimmed hat. Chalk Drawing. Basel Museum. (This is one of the most beautiful of Holbein's portrait studies. There is a soft, yet virile, witchery about it which haunts the memory.)

Round Portrait of Erasmus. (Bust,  $\frac{3}{4}$  view.) Oils. Basel Museum.

Designs for dagger-sheaths and other goldsmith's work. Washed Drawings. Basel Museum, British Museum, etc. (More especially the "Dance of Death"; a chef-d'œuvre.)

A ship making sail. Washed Drawing. Städel Institut. Frankfort.

## PRINCIPAL EXISTING WORKS 193

### V.

#### LAST PERIOD ; LONDON

(1531-43)

**\*\* Portrait of Jörg Gyze.** [Plate 27.] Oils. Berlin Gallery.

Portrait of an unknown man. Oils. Schönborn Gallery, Vienna.

Johann or Hans of Antwerp. Oils. Windsor Castle. (Holbein's friend and executor.)

Derich Tybis of Duisburg. Oils. Imperial Gallery, Vienna.

Derich Born. Oils. Munich Gallery, and Windsor Castle.

Derich Berck. Oils. Petworth.

Unknown Man. Oils. Prado Gallery, Madrid.

The Triumph of Riches. Drawing. The Louvre. (Copies of this and the pendant design, The Triumph of Poverty, in the British Museum and in the Collection of Lady Eastlake.)

The Queen of Sheba before Solomon. Washed Drawing, heightened with gold and colours. Windsor Castle.

Robert Cheseman, with falcon. Oils. Hague Gallery.

\* "The Ambassadors." [Plate 28.] Oils. National Gallery. (A double portrait, life size. Formerly supposed to be Sir Thomas Wyatt and a scholar; now officially held to be Jean de Dinteville, Bailli de Troyes, and George de Selve, Bishop of Lavaur. As stated in the text, the present writer differs from any identification of either figure yet published, but is not prepared to put forward her own views for the present.)

Nicholas Bourbon de Vandœuvre, scholar and poet. Chalk Drawing. Windsor Castle. (An intimate

Title-page used in Cranmer's Bible. Woodcut. (This is the title-page from which Cromwell's Arms are erased in the second edition.)

Sir Nicholas Carew. Oils. Dalkeith Palace. Chalk Drawing. Basel Museum.

Simon George of Cornwall. Oils. Städel Institut, Frankfort.

Miniature portrait of Charles Brandon, son of the Duke of Suffolk. Windsor Castle.

Lady; unknown. Oils. Imperial Gallery, Vienna. Also a fine portrait of an unknown man. Oils. Same Gallery.

Sir Richard Southwell. Oils. Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Chalk Drawing. Windsor Castle.

John Reskymeer. Oils. Hampton Court Gallery.

Nicholas Poyntz. Oils. De la Rosière Collection, Paris. Chalk Drawing. Windsor Castle.

Sir John Russell. Oils. Woburn Abbey. Chalk Drawing. Windsor Castle.

Three portraits; men unknown. Oils. Berlin Gallery. Designs for jewelry, ornamental panels, clocks, chimney-piece, etc., etc. Washed Drawings. British Museum, Basel Museum, etc.

Many fine portraits of which no versions in oils are known. Chalk Drawings. Windsor Castle. Among these one of Edward VI. as boy Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Suffolk, Sir Thomas Wyatt, etc., etc.

Dr. John Chamber, or Chambers. Oils. Imperial Gallery, Vienna.

Also many other oil-portraits, more or less genuine, in various Collections.

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